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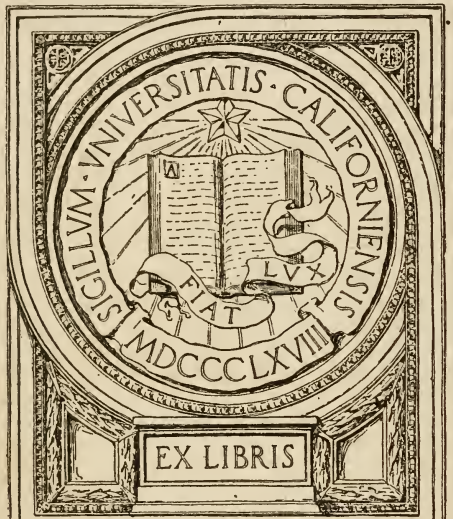

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THE MORGESONS.

BY ELIZABETH STODDARD.

"*Time is a clever devil.*" BALZAC.

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TO

My Three Friends,

THE THREE POETS,

RICHARD,

BAYARD,

GEORGE,

I DEDICATE THIS NOVEL.

1861. E. D. B. S.

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THE MORGESONS.

CHAPTER I.

"THAT child," said my aunt Mercy, looking at me with indigo-colored eyes, "is possessed."

When my aunt said this I was climbing a chest of drawers, by its knobs, in order to reach the book shelves above it, where my favorite work, "The Northern Regions," was kept, together with "Baxter's Saints' Rest," and other volumes of that sort, which belonged to my mother; and those which my father bought for his own reading, which I liked the best, though I only caught a glimpse of their meaning by strenuous study. To this day Sheridan's Comedies, Sterne's Sentimental Journey, and Captain Cook's Voyages are so mixed up in my remembrance, that I am still uncertain whether it was Sterne who ate baked dog with Maria, or Sheridan who wept over a dead ass in the Sandwich Islands.

After I had made a dash at, and captured my book, I seated myself with difficulty on the edge of the chest of drawers, and was soon lost in an Esquimaux hut. Presently, in crossing my feet, my shoes, which were large and heavy, dropped on the painted floor with a loud noise. I looked up at my aunt; her regards were still fixed upon me, but they did not interfere with her occupation of knitting; neither did they interrupt her habit of chewing. She generally had something in her mouth, —cloves, flagroot, or grains of rice; if these articles were not at hand, she chewed a small chip. She was now masticating rice; I knew it by the motion of her jaws—the grains slipped between her teeth.

"Aunt Merce, poor Hepburn chewed his shoes, when he was in Davis' Straits."

"Mary, look at the holes in that child's stockings."

Mother raised her eyes from "The Boston Recorder," and the article she had been absorbed in—the proceedings of an Ecclesiastical Council, which had discussed (she read aloud to Aunt Merce) the conduct of Brother Thaddeus Turner, pastor of the Congregational Church of Hyena. Brother Thaddeus had spoken lightly of the difference between Sprinkling and Immersion, and had even called Hyena's Baptist minister, "*Brother.*" He was contumacious at first, was Brother Thaddeus, but Brother Boanerges from Andover finally floored him.

"Cassandra," said Mother, "come here."

I obeyed with reluctance, making a show of turning down a leaf.

"Child," she continued, and her eyes wandered over me dreamily, till they dropped on my stockings; "why will you waste so much time on unprofitable stories?"

"Mother, I hate good stories, all but the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain; I like that, because it makes me hungry to read about the roasted potatoes the shepherd had for breakfast and supper. Would it make me thankful if you only gave me potatoes without salt?"

"Not unless your heart is right before God."

"'*The Lord my Shepherd is*,'" sang Aunt Merce.

I put my hands over my ears, and looked defiantly round the room. Its walls are no longer standing, and the hands of its builders have crumbled to dust. I can describe it, as it looked then; how it was for years afterwards I cannot remember. Some mental accident stimulated the purblind memory of childhood, and impressed its picture on my memory.

We were in mother's winter room. She was seated in a low, chintz-covered chair; Aunt Merce sat by the window, in a straight-backed, one-sided chair, that rocked querulously, and was likewise covered with chintz, of a red and yellow pattern. Before the lower half of the windows were curtains of red serge, which she rattled apart on their brass rods, whenever she heard a footstep, or the creak of a wheel in the road below. The walls were hung with white paper, through which ran thread-like stripes of green. A square of green and chocolate-colored English carpet covered the middle of the floor, and a row of straw-colored wooden chairs stood around it, on the bare, lead-colored boards. A huge bed, with a chintz top,

shaped like an elephant's back, was in one corner, and a six-legged mahogany table in another. The side of the room where the fire place was set was paneled in wood. The fire had burned down in the shining Franklin stove, and the broken brands were standing upright. The charred oak back log still smouldered, for its sap hissed and bubbled at each end. There was a smell of cold ashes and faded smoke in the room.

Aunt Mercc was rummaging her pocket for flagroot; Mother had resumed her paper.

"May I put on, for a little while, my new slippers?" I asked, longing to escape the oppressive atmosphere of the room.

"Yes," answered mother, "but it is near night; you must come in soon, it will be supper time."

I bounded away, found my slippers, which had been bought the week before in Milford, the shire town, eight miles from our village, and was walking down stairs on tip-toe, holding up my linsey-woolsey frock, when I saw the door of my great-grandfather's room ajar. I pushed it open and went in. A very old man, his head bound with a red silk handkerchief, was bolstered up in bed His wife, grandmother-in-law, sat by the fire reading a great Bible.

"Marm Tamor, will you please show me Ruth and Boaz?"

She complied by turning over the leaves till she came to the picture.

"Did Ruth love Boaz much?"

"Oh, oh," groaned the old man, "what is the imp doing here? Drive her away. S'cat."

I skipped out by a side door, down the alley which was paved with blue pebbles, swung the high gate open, and walked up and down the gravel walk which bordered the road-side, admiring my slippers, and wishing that some acquaintance with poor shoes could see me. I thought then that I would climb one of the high gate posts, which had a flat top, and take the position of the little girl in "The Shawl Dance." (Vide Miss Leslie.) I had no sooner taken it than aunt Mercc appeared at the door. She gave a shriek at the sight of me, which tempted me to jump towards her with extended arms. I was seized by my skirts, and carried into the house where my supper was administered to me. Shortly afterwards she put me to bed, heard me say the Lord's Prayer, and mixed some medicine, which she compelled me to take, saying, over and over again, "one swallow more." Spring had come, and my blood

must be purified, she said. As a reward for taking the medicine, she told me a Revolutionary story about her grandfather, who, when the British man-of-war, "Nimrod," lay in Milford Harbor, rowed off to the ship bare-headed, in his uniform, but unarmed, to challenge the officers, because the crew had set the town on fire. Before their reply I fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

At this time I was ten years old. We lived in a New England village, Surrey, which was situated on an inlet of a large bay that opened into the Atlantic. From the observatory of our house we could see how the inlet was pinched by the long claws of the land, which nearly enclosed it. Outside, some ten miles across and opposite the village, a range of islands cut off the view of the main waters of the bay. For miles on the outer side of the curving prongs of land stretched a rugged, desolate coast, indented with coves and creeks, lined with beds of granite half sunken in the sea, and edged with beaches overgrown with pale sedge, or covered with beds of sea-weed. Nothing alive, except the gulls, abode on these solitary shores. No light-house stood on any point, to shake its long warning light across the mariners' wake. Now and then a drowned man floated in amongst the sedge, or a small craft went to pieces on the rocks. When an easterly wind prevailed the coast resounded with the bellowing sea, which brought us tidings from those inaccessible spots We heard its roar as it leaped over the rocks on Gloster Point, and its long unbroken wail when it rolled in on Whitefoot Beach. In mild weather, too, when our harbor was quiet, we still heard its whimper. Behind the village, the ground rose towards the north. The horizon was bounded by woods of oak and pine, intersected by crooked roads, which led to the towns and villages near us. The inland scenery was tame; no hill or dale broke its dull uniformity Corn fields, and meadows of red grass, walled with gray stone, lay between the village and the border of the woods. Seaward it was enchanting—beautiful under the sun and moon, and clouds.

Our family had lived in Surrey for years. Probably some Puritan of the name of Morgeson had moved from an earlier settlement, and appropriating a few acres in what was now

its centre, had lived long enough upon them to see his sons and daughters married to the sons and daughters of similar settlers. So our name was in perpetuation. But none of our race ever made a mark in his own circle, or attained a place among the great ones of his day. The family recipes for curing herbs and hams, and making cordials, were in better preservation than the memory of their makers. It is certain that they were not a progressive or changeable family. No tradition of any individuality remains concerning them. There was a confusion in the minds of the survivors of the various generations, about the degree of their relationship to those who were buried, and whose names and ages simply were cut in the stones which headed their graves. The *meum* and *tuum* of blood were inextricably mixed; so they contented themselves with giving their children the old Christian names which were carved on the head-stones, and which, in time, added a still more profound darkness to the anti-heraldic memory of the Morgesons They had no knowledge of that treasure which so many of our New England families are boastful of—the Ancestor who came over in the Mayflower, or by himself, with a grant of land from Parliament. It was not known whether two or three brothers sailed together from the Old World and settled in the New. They had no portrait, nor curious chair, nor rusty weapon; no old Bible, nor drinking cup, nor remnant of brocade.

Morgeson—Born—Lived—Died—were all their archives. But there is a dignity in mere perpetuity, a strength in the narrowest affinities. This dignity and strength were theirs. They are still vital in our rural population. Occasionally something fine is their result; an aboriginal re-appears, and proves the plastic powers of nature.

My great-grandfather, Locke Morgeson, the old man whose head I saw bound in a red handkerchief, was the first noticeable man of the name. He was a scale of enthusiasms, ranging from the melancholy to the sarcastic. When I have heard him talked of, it has seemed to me that he was born under the influence of the sea, and that the rest of the tribe inherited the character of the landscape. Comprehension of life, and comprehension of self, came too late for him to make either of value. The spirit of progress, however, which prompted his schemes, benefited others. The most that could be said of him was, that he had the rudiments of a Founder.

My father, whose name was Locke Morgeson also, married early. My mother was five years his elder; her maiden name

was Mary Warren. She was the daughter of Philip Warren, of Barmouth, a town near Surrey, but one of greater importance in size and wealth. He was the best of the two Barmouth tailors, though his ideas respecting the cut of garments were the most antiquated, and was a rigidly pious man, of great influence in the church, whose belfry stood over against his ancient dwelling. He was descended from Sir Edward Warren, a gentleman of Devon, who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. The name of his more immediate ancestor, Richard Warren, was in "New England's Memorial." How father first met mother I know not. She was singularly beautiful—beautiful even to the day of her death; but she was poor, and without connection, for Philip Warren was the last of his name. What the Warrens might have been, was nothing to the Morgesons; they themselves had no past, and only realized the present. They never thought of inquiring into that matter, so they opposed, with great promptness, father's wish to marry Mary Warren. All, except old Locke Morgeson, his grandfather, who rode over to Barmouth to see her one day, and when he came back told father to take her; and offered him half his house to live in, promising to push him along in the world. His offer quelled the rioters, silencing in particular the opposition of John Morgeson, father's father. Their dislike to mother, however, was made stronger by old Locke's favor.

In a month from this time, Locke Morgeson, Jr., took Mary Warren from her father's house, as his wife. Grandfather Warren prayed a long unintelligible prayer over them, helped them into the large, yellow-bottomed chaise which belonged to Grandfather Locke, and the young couple drove to their new home, the old mansion Grandfather Locke went away in the same yellow-bottomed chaise a week after, and returned in a few days with a tall lady of fifty by his side—"Marm Tamor," a twig of the Morgeson tree, being his third cousin, whom he had married. This marriage was grandfather Locke's last mistake. He was then near eighty. He lived long enough to fulfil his promises to father, though alertly watched by Marm Tamor, who had designs of her own, and an affectionate family impatiently waiting her return home. In a year from the time of mother's marriage I was born, and four years after, my sister Veronica. Grandfather Locke named us both, and charged father not to consult the Morgeson tomb stones for names, in case he should have more children.

CHAPTER III.

"Mrs. Saunders," said mother, "don't let that soap boil over. Cassy, keep away from it."

"Lord," replied Mrs. Saunders, "there's no fat in the bones *to* bile. Cassy's grown dreadful fast, ain't she? How long has the old man been dead, Mis Morgeson?"

"Three years, Mrs. Saunders."

"How time do fly," remarked Mrs. Saunders, mopping her wrinkled face with a dark blue handkerchief. "The winter's sass is hardly put in the cellar, 'fore we have to cut off the sprouts, and up the taters for planting agin. We shall all foller him soon." And she stirred the bones in the great kettle with the vigor of an ogress.

When I heard her ask the question about Grandfather Locke, the interval that had elapsed since his death swept back through my mind. What a little girl I was at the time! How much had since happened! But no thought remained with me long. I was about to settle what I had been thinking of, whether I would go down to the beach and wade, or up into the woods for snake flowers till school-time, when my attention was again arrested by Mrs. Saunders saying, "I spose Marm Tamor went off with a large slice, and Mr. John Morgeson is mad to this day?"

Mother was prevented from answering by the appearance of the said Mr. John Morgeson, who darkened the threshold of the kitchen door, but advanced no farther. I looked at him with curiosity; if he were mad, he might be interesting He was a large, portly man, over sixty, with splendid black hair slightly grizzled, a prominent nose, and fair complexion. I did not like him, and determined not to speak to him.

"Say good morning, Cassandra," said mother, in a low voice.

"No," I answered loudly, "I am not fond of my grandfather."

Mrs. Saunders mopped her face again, grinning with delight behind her handkerchief.

"Debby, my wife, wants you, Mis Saunders, after you have made Mary's soap," he said.

"Surely," she answered.

"Where is the black horse to-day?" he asked mother.

"Locke has gone to Milford with him."

"I wanted the black horse to-day," he said, turning away.

"He's a mighty grand man, he is," commented Mrs. Saunders. "I am pesky glad, Mis Morgeson, that you have never put foot in his house. I 'plaud your sperit!"

"School time, Cassy," said mother. "Will you have some gingerbread to carry? Tell me when you come home what you have read in the New Testament."

"My boy does read beautiful," said Mrs. Saunders. "Where's the potash, Mis Morgeson?"

I heard the bell toll as I loitered along the roadside, pulling a dandelion here and there, for it was in the month of May, and throwing it in the rut for the next wheel to crush. When I reached the school house I saw through the open door that the New Testament exercise was over. The teacher, Mrs. Desire Cushman, a tall slender woman, in a flounced calico dress, was walking up and down the room, with a small ferule in one hand, and an arithmetic in the other; a class of boys and girls stood in a zig-zag line before her, swaying to and fro, and drawling in a sing-song voice the multiplication table. She was yawning as I entered, which exercise forbade her speaking, and I took my seat without a reprimand. The flies were just coming; I watched their sticky legs as they feebly crawled over my old unpainted notched desk, and crumbled my gingerbread for them; but they seemed to have no appetite. Some of the younger children were drowsy already, lulled by the hum of the whisperers. Feeling very dull I asked permission to go to the water pail for a drink; let the tin cup fall into the water so that the floor might be splashed; made faces at the good scholars, and did what I could to make the time pass agreeably. At noon mother sent my dinner, with the request that I should stay till night, on account of my being in the way while the household was in the crisis of soap-making and whitewashing. I was exasperated, but I staid. In the afternoon the minister came with two strangers to visit the school. I went through my lessons with dignified inaccuracy, and was commended. Going back I happened to step on a loose board under my seat. I determined to punish Mrs. Desire for the undeserved praise I had just received, and pushed

the board till it clatttered and made a dust. When Mrs. Desire detected me she turned white with anger. I pushed it again, making so much noise that the visitors turned to see the cause. She shook her head in my direction, and I knew what was in store, as we had been at enmity a long time, and she only waited for a decisive piece of mischief on my part. As soon as the visitors had gone, she said in a loud voice, "Cassandra Morgeson, take your books and go home. You shall not come here another day."

I was glad to go, and marched home with the air of a conqueror. I went into the keeping room where mother sat with a basket of sewing. Temperance Tinkham, the help, a maiden of thirty, was laying the table for supper.

"Don't wrinkle the table-cloth," she said crossly; "and hang up your bonnet in the entry, where it belongs," taking it from me as she gave the order, and going out to hang it up herself.

"I am turned out of school, mother, for pushing a board with my foot."

"Hi," said father, who was waiting for his supper; "come here," and he whistled to me. He took me on his knee, while mother looked at me with doubt and sorrow.

"She is almost a woman, Mary."

"Locke, do you know that I am thirty-eight?"

"And you are thirty-three, father," I exclaimed. He looked younger. I thought then that he was handsome; he had a frank, firm face, an abundance of light, curly hair, and was very robust. I took off his white beaver hat, and pushed the curls away from his forehead. He had his riding whip in his hand. I took that, too, and snapped it at our little dog, Kip. Father had new clothes on, which pleased me—a lavender-colored coat, with brass buttons, and trousers of the same color. I mentally composed for myself a suit to match his, and thought how well we should look calling at Lady Teazle's house in London; only I was worried because my bonnet seemed to be too large for me. A loud crash in the kitchen disturbed my dream. Temperance rushed in, dragging my sister Veronica, whose hair was streaming with milk; she had pulled a panful over her from the buttery shelf, while Temperance was taking up the supper. Father laughed, but mother said:

"What have I done, to be so tormented by these terrible children?"

Her mild blue eyes blazed; she stamped her foot, and

clenched her hands. Father took his hat and left the room. Veronica sat down on the floor, with her eyes fixed upon her, and I leaned against the wall. It was a gust that I knew would soon blow over. Veronica knew it also. At the right moment she cried out: "Help Verry, she is sorry."

"Do eat your supper," Temperance called out in a loud voice. "The hash is burnt to flinders."

She remained in the room to comment on our appetites, and encourage Veronica, who was never hungry, to eat.

Veronica was an elfish creature. She was nine years old, but diminutive and pale. Her long, silky, brown hair, which was as straight as an Indian's, like mother's, and which she tore out when angry, usually covered her face, and her wild eyes looked wilder still peeping through it. She was too strange looking for ordinary people to call her pretty, and so odd in her behavior, so full of tricks, that I did not love her. She was a silent child, and liked to be alone. But whoever had the charge of her had to be watchful. She tasted everything, and burnt everything within her reach. A blazing fire was too strong a temptation to be resisted. The disappearance of all loose articles was ascribed to her; but nothing was said to her about it, for punishment made her more impish and daring in her pursuits. She had a habit of frightening us by hiding, and appearing from places where no one had thought of looking for her. People shook their heads when they observed her. The Morgesons smiled significantly when she was spoken of, and asked:

"Do you think she is like her mother?"

There was a conflict in mother's mind respecting Veronica. She did not love her as she loved me; but she strove the harder to fulfil her duty towards her. When Verry suffered long and mysterious illnesses, which made her helpless for weeks, she watched her day and night, but rarely caressed her. At other times Verry was left pretty much to herself and her own ways, which were so separate from mine that I scarcely saw her. We grew up ignorant of each other's character, though Verry knew me better than I knew her; in time I discovered that she had closely observed me, when I was most unawares.

We began to prosper about this time.

"Old Locke Morgeson had a long head," people said, when they talked of our affairs. Father had profited by his grandfather's plans, and his means, too; less visionary, he had modified and brought out practically many of his projections. Old

Locke had left little to his son John Morgeson, in the belief, and hope, that father was the man to carry out his ideas; but he advised John to make his investments with him, for John was well-off, having married two wives and two farms, so that a company of the name might be founded Besides money he left to father a tract of ground running north and south, a few rods beyond the old house, and desired him to build upon it. This father was now doing, and we expected to get into our new house before autumn. The old mansion was to stand empty.

All the Morgesons wished to put money in the new company, as soon, they said, as father could prove to them that it would be profitable. They were ready to own shares in the ships which he expected to build, when it was certain that they would make lucky voyages. He declined their offers, but they all "knuckled" to the man who had been bold enough to break the life-long stagnation of Surrey, and with hands and wills supine approved his plans as they matured. His mind was filled with the hope of creating a great business which should improve Surrey. New streets had been cut through his property and that of grandfather, who, narrow as he was, could not resist the popular spirit; lots had been laid out, and cottages even had gone up upon them. To matters of minor importance father gave little heed; his domestic life was fast becoming a habit The constant enlargement of his schemes was already a necessary stimulant. Intense activity—activity that was not subservient to self-interest, or to self-consciousness—was his ruling characteristic.

Of course I did not go back to Mrs. Desire's school. Mother said that I must now make myself useful at home. She sent me to Temperance, and Temperance sent me to play, or told me to go "a visitin'." I did not care to visit, for in consequence of being turned out of school, which was considered an indelible disgrace, and always remembered, my schoolmates regarded me in the light of a Pariah, and put on insufferably superior airs when they saw me. So, like Veronica, I amused myself, and passed days on the sea shore, or in the fields and woods, mother keeping me at home long enough to make a square of patchwork each day, and to hear her read a Psalm—a duty which I bore with patience, by guessing when the "Selahs" would come in, and by counting them But wherever I was, or whatever I did, no feeling of beauty ever stole into my heart. I never turned my face up to the sky to watch the passing of a cloud, or mused before the undulating space of sea, or looked down upon the earth with the curiosity

of thought, or with one spiritual aspiration. I was moved and governed by my sensations, which continually changed, and passed away—to come again, and deposit a vague want of occupation which ignorantly haunted me. The literal images of all things which I saw were impressed on my shapeless mind, to be reproduced afterwards by faculties then latent. But what satisfaction was that? Doubtless the ideal faculty was active in Veronica from the beginning; in me it was developed by the experience of years. No remembrance of any ideal condition comes with the remembrance of my childish days, and I conclude that my mind, if I had any, existed in so rudimental a state, that it had no influence upon my character.

CHAPTER IV.

One afternoon in the following July, tired of walking in the mown fields, and of carrying a nest of mice, which I had discovered under a hay-rick, I concluded I would begin a system of education with them; so arranging them on a grape leaf, which I had pulled off by the alder bushes along the stone wall, I started homeward. Going in by the kitchen I saw Temperance wiping the dust from the best china, which elated me, for it was a sign that we were going to have company to tea.

"You evil child," she said, "where have you been? Your mother has wanted you these hours, to dress you in your red French calico with wings to it. Some of the members are coming to tea; Miss Seneth Jellatt, and she that was Clarissa Tripp, Snow now, and Mis Sophrony G. Dexter, and more besides."

I put my mice in a basket, and begged Temperance to allow me to finish wiping the china; she consented, adjuring me not to let it fall. "Mis Morgeson would die if any of it should be broken." I adored it, too. Each piece had a peach, or pear, or a bunch of cherries painted on it, in lustrous brown. The handles were like gold cords, and the covers had knobs of gilt grapes.

"What preserves are you going to put on the table?" I asked.

"Them West Ingy things Capen Curtis's son brought home,

and quartered quince, though I expect Mis Dexter will remark that the surup is ropy."

"I wish you wouldn't have cheese."

"We *must* have cheese," she said solemnly. "I expect they'll drink our green tea till they make bladders of themselves, it is so good. Your father is a first-rate man; he is an excellent provider, and any woman ought to be proud of him, for he does buy number one in provisions."

I looked at her with admiration and respect.

"Capen Curtis," she continued, pursuing a train of thought which the preserves had started, "will never come home, I guess. He has been in furen parts forever and a day; his wife has looked for him, a-twirling her thumb and fingers, every day for ten years. I heard your mother had engaged her to go in the new house; she'll take the upper hand of us all. Your grandfather, Mr. John Morgeson, is willing to part with her; tired of her I s'pose. She has been housekeeping there, off and on, these thirty years. She's fifty, if she is a day, is Hepsy Curtis."

"Is she as stingy as you are?" I asked.

"You'll find out for yourself, Miss. I rather think you won't be allowed to crumble over the buttery shelves."

I finished the cups, and was watching her while she grated loaf sugar over a pile of doughnuts, when mother entered, and begged me to come up stairs with her to be dressed.

"Where is Verry, mother?"

"In the parlor, with a lemon in one hand and Robinson Crusoe in the other. She will be good, she says. Cassy, you won't teaze me to-day, will you?"

"No, indeed, mother," and clapping my hands, "I like you too well."

She laughed.

"These Morgesons beat the dogs," I heard Temperance say, as we shut the door, and went up stairs.

I skipped over the shiny lead-colored floor of the chamber in my stockings, while mother was taking from the bureau a clean suit for me, and singing "Bonny Doon," with the sweetest voice in the world. She soon arrayed me in my red calico dress, spotted with yellow stars. I was proud of its buckram undersleeves, though they scratched my arms, and admired its wings, which extended over the protecting buckram.

"It is three o'clock; the company will come soon. Be careful of your dress. You must stand by me at the table to hand the cups of tea."

She left me standing in a chair, so that I might see my pantalettes in the high-hung glass, and the effect of my balloon-like sleeves. Then I went back to the kitchen to show myself to Temperance, and to enjoy the progress of tea.

The table was laid in the long keeping-room adjoining the kitchen. It was covered with a striped cloth of crimson and blue, smooth as satin to the touch. Temperance had turned the plates upside down around the table, and placed in a straight line through the middle a row of edibles. She was going to have waffles, she said, and short cake; they were all ready to bake, and she wished to the Lord they would come, and have it over with. With the silver sugar tongs I slyly nipped lumps of sugar for my private eating, and surveyed my features in the distorting mirror of the pot-bellied silver tea pot, ordinarily laid up in flannel, on which were Grandfather Locke's initials, intermingled with those of his first wife, Rachel Somers. When the company had arrived, Temperance advised me to go in the parlor.

"Sit down, when you get there, and show less," she said. I went in softly, and stood behind mother's chair, slightly abashed for a moment in the presence of the party—some eight or ten ladies, dressed in black Levantine, or cinnamon-colored silks, who were seated in rocking chairs, all the rocking chairs in the house having been carried to the parlor for the occasion. They were knitting, and every one had a square velvet work bag. Most of them wore lace caps, trimmed with white satin ribbon. They were larger, more rotund, and older than mother, whose appearance struck me by contrast. Perhaps it was the first time that I observed her dress; her face I must have studied before, for I knew all her moods by it. Her long, lustreless, brown hair was twisted round a high-topped tortoise shell comb; it was so heavy and so carelessly twisted, that the comb started backwards, threatening to fall out. She had minute rings of filagreed gold in her ears. Her dress was a grey Pongee, simply made, and short; I could see her round-toed, morocco shoes, tied with black ribbon. She usually took out her shoe strings, not liking the trouble of tying them. A ruffle of fine lace fell round her throat, and the sleeves of her short-waisted dress were puffed at the shoulders. Her small white hands were folded in her lap, for she was idle; on the little finger of her left hand twinkled a brilliant garnet ring, set round with diamonds. Her face was colorless; the forehead extremely low, the nose and mouth finely cut, the eyes a heavenly blue. Although youth had gone, she

was beautiful, and had an indescribable air of individuality She influenced all who were near her; her atmosphere enveloped them. She was not aware of it; she was too indifferent to the world to observe what effect she had in it, and only realized what she was to herself, being a self-tormentor. Whether she attracted, or repelled, the power was the same. I make no attempt to analyze her character. I describe her as she appeared, and as my memory now holds her. I never understood her, and for that reason she attracted my attention. I felt puzzled now, she seemed so different from anybody else. My observation was next drawn to Veronica, who, entirely at home, walked up and down the room in a blue cambric dress. She was twisting in her fingers a fine gold chain, which hung from her neck. I caught her cunning glance as she flourished some tansey leaves before her face, imitating Mrs. Dexter to the life. I laughed, and she came to me.

"See," she said softly, "I have something from heaven." She lifted her white apron, and I saw under it, pinned to her dress, a splendid black butterfly, spotted with red and gold.

"It is mine," she said, "you shall not touch it. God blew it in through the window; but it has not breathed yet."

"Pooh; I have three mice in the kitchen."

"Where is the mother?"

"In the hay-rick, I suppose."

"I hate you," she said in an enraged voice. "I would strike you, if it wasn't for this holy butterfly."

"Cassandria," said Mrs. Dexter, "does look like her pa; the likeness is ex-tri-ordinary. They say my William resembles me; but parients are no judges."

A faint murmur rose from the knitters, which signified agreement with her remark.

"I do think," she continued, "that it is high time Dr. Snell had a colleague; he has outlived his usefulness. I never could say that I thought he was the right kind of man for our congregation; his principalls as a man, I have nothing to say against; but *why* don't we have revivals?"

When Mrs. Dexter wished to be elegant she stepped out of the vernacular. She was about to speak again when the whole party broke into a loud talk on the subject she had started, not observing Temperance, who appeared at the door, and beckoned to mother. I followed her out.

"The members are goin' it, aint they?" she said. "Do see if things are about right, Mis Morgeson.' Mother made a few deviations from the straight lines in which Temperance had

ranged the viands, and told her to put the tea on the tray, and the chairs round the table.

"There's no place for Mr. Morgeson," observed Temperance.

"He is in Milford," mother replied.

"The brethren won't come, I s'pose, till after dark?"

"I suppose not."

"Glad to get rid of their wives' clack, I guess."

From the silence which followed mother's return to the parlor, I concluded they were performing the ancient ceremony of waiting for some one to go through the doorway first. They came at last with an air of indifference, as if the idea of eating had not yet occurred, and delayed taking seats till mother urged it; they then drew up to the table hastily, turned the plates right side up, spread large silk handkerchiefs over their laps, and, with their eyes fixed on space, preserved a dead silence, which was only broken by mother's inquiries about their taste in milk or sugar. Temperance came in with plates of waffles and buttered short cake, which she offered with a cut and thrust air, saying, as she did so, "I expect you can't eat them; I know they are tough."

Everybody, however, accepted both. She then handed round the preserves, and went out to bake more waffles.

By this time the cups had circled the table, but no one had tasted a morsel.

"Do help yourselves," mother entreated, whereat they fell upon the waffles.

"Temperance is as good a cook as ever," said one; "she is a prize, isn't she Mis Morgeson?"

"She is faithful and industrious," mother replied.

All began at once on the subject of help, and were as suddenly quenched by the re-appearance of Temperance, with fresh waffles, and a dish of apple fritters.

"Do eat these if you can, ladies; the apples are only russets, and they are kinder dead for flavoring. I see you don't eat a mite; I expected you could not; its poor trash." And she passed the cake along, everybody taking a piece of each kind.

After drinking a good many cups of tea, and praising it, their asceticism gave way to its social effect, and they began to gossip, ridiculing their neighbors, and occasionally launching inuendoes against their absent lords. It is well known that when women meet together they do not discuss their rights, but take them, by revealing the little weaknesses and pecu-

liarities of their husbands. The worst wife-driver would be confounded at the air of easy superiority assumed on these occasions, by the meekest and most unsuspicious of her sex. Insinuations of So and So's not being any better than she should be passed from mouth to mouth, with a glance at me; and I heard the proverb of "Little pitchers," when mother rose suddenly from the table, and led the way to the parlor.

"Where is Veronica?" asked Temperance, who was piling the débris of the feast. "She has been in mischief, I'll warrant; find her, Cassandra."

She was up stairs putting away her butterfly, in the leaves of her little Bible. She came down with me, and Temperance coaxed her to eat her supper, by vowing that she should be sick abed, unless she liked her fritters and waffles. I thought of my mice, while making a desultory meal standing, and went to look at them; they were gone. Wondering if Temperance had thrown the creatures away, I remembered that I had been foolish enough to tell Veronica, and rushed back to her. When she saw me, she raised a saucer to her face, pretending to drink from it.

"Verry, where are the mice?"

"Are they gone?"

"Tell me."

"What will you do if I don't?"

"I know," and I flew up stairs, tore the poor butterfly from between the leaves of the Bible, crushed it in my hand, and brought it down to her. She did not cry when she saw it, but choked a little, and turned away her head.

It was now dark, and hearing a bustle in the entry I looked out, and saw several staid men slowly rubbing their feet on the door mat; the husbands had come to escort their wives home, and by nine o'clock they all went. Veronica and I staid by the door after they had gone.

"Look at Mrs. Dexter," she said; "I put the mice in her work bag."

I burst into a laugh, which she joined in, till she cried.

"I am sorry about the butterfly, Verry." And I attempted to take her hand, but she pushed me away, and marched off whistling.

A few days after this, sitting near the window at twilight, intent upon a picture in a book of travels, of a Hindoo swinging from a high pole with hooks in his flesh, and trying to imagine how much it hurt him, my attention was arrested by a mention of my name in a conversation held between mother and Mr.

Park, one of the neighbors. He occasionally spent an evening at our house, passing it in polemical discussion. He revised and enlarged the prayers and exhortations which he had made in the conference meetings, as he repeated them to mother, with his eyes fixed on her. The good man was a little vain of his having the formulas of his creed at his tongue's end. While she listened, she sometimes lost the thread of his discourse; her eyes wandered, she appeared lost in a region beyond polemic pales. When she returned she argued also, as if to convince herself that she could rightly distinguish between Truth and Illusion. She never discussed religious topics with father. Like all the Morgesons, he was Orthodox, accepting what had been provided for his spiritual accommodation. He thought it well that existing Institutions should not be disturbed. "Something worse might be established instead." His turn of mind, in short, was not Evangelical.

"Are the Hindoos in earnest, mother?" and I thrust the picture before her; she warned me off.

"Do you think, Mr. Park, that Cassandra can understand the law of transgression?"

An acute perception that it was in my power to escape a moral penalty, by wilful ignorance, was revealed to me. I felt I could continue the privilege of sinning with impunity. His answer was complicated, and he quoted several passages from the Scriptures. Presently he began to sing, and I grew lonesome; the life within me seemed a black cave.

"Our nature 's totally depraved—
The heart a sink of sin;
Without a change we can't be saved,
Ye must be born again."

Temperance opened the door. "Is Veronica going to bed to-night?" she asked.

CHAPTER V.

The next September we moved. Our new house was large and handsome. On the south side there was nothing between it and the sea, except the carriage way and a few feet of sand. No tree or shrub intercepted the view. To the eastward a promontory of rocks jutted into the sea, serving as a pier against the wash of the tide, and adding a picturesqueness to

the curve of the beach. On the north side flourished an orchard, which was planted by grandfather Locke. Looking over the tree-tops from the upper north windows, one would have had no suspicion of being in the neighborhood of the sea, unless too familiar with the stunted character of the scenery to be misled by the immediate view. From these windows, in winter, we saw the mysterious nimbus of the Northern Light; and the darkness of our sky, and the stillness of the night, mysteriously reflected the perpetual condition of its own solitary world. In summer we saw ragged white clouds rise above the horizon, as if they had been torn from the sky of some under-world, and sail up into the blue heaven, to languish away, or turn livid with thunder and roll off seaward. The hall and mother's bed-room were on that side; between the orchard and the windows a narrow lawn sloped easterly to the border of a brook, which straggled behind the outhouses into a meadow, and finally lost itself among the rocks on the shore. Up by the lawn a willow hung over it, and its outer bank was fringed by the tangled wild grape, sweet-briar, and alder bushes. The west end of the house stood towards the road, which made a turn there and went northward. The premises, except on the sea-side, were enclosed by a high wall of rough granite. No house stood near us, on either side of the shore; but up the north road they were scattered at intervals; and the village lay to the west, in the centre of which was the old Morgeson mansion, now empty.

Mother said I must be considered a young lady, as I was fourteen, and I should have my own room, which I must take care of. In a week I became weary of the routine of bed-making and dusting, and gave it up. Veronica was to have in time the room opposite mine, divided from it by a wide passage. This passage extended beyond the angle of the stairway, and was cut off by a glass door. At the head of the staircase was a window, whose light, transmitted through the glass door, made the region of Veronica's room and my own a dusky one. A wall ran across the lower end of the passage; half the house was beyond its other side. When the glass door was fastened, Veronica and myself were in a cul-de-sac.

The establishment was put on a larger footing. Mrs. Hepsey Curtis was installed mistress of the kitchen. Temperance declared that she could not stand it; that she wasn't a nigger; that she must go; but she had no home, and no friends—nothing but a wood lot, which was left her by her father the miller. As the trees thereon grew, promising to make timber,

its value increased; at present her income was limited to the profit from the annual sale of a cord or two of wood. So she staid on, in spite of Hepsey. There were also two men for the garden and stable. A boy was always attached to the house; not the same boy, but a Boy dynasty, for as soon as one went another came, who ate a great deal—a crime in Hepsey's eyes—and whose general duty was to carry armfuls of wood, pails of milk, or swill, and to shut doors.

We had many visitors. Though father had no time to devote to guests, he was continually inviting people for us to entertain, and his invitations were taken as a matter of course, and finally for granted. A rich Morgeson was a new feature in the family annals, and distant relations improved the advantage offered them, by coming to spend the summer with us, because their own houses were too hot, or the winter, because they were too cold! Infirm old ladies, who were not related to us, but who had no where else to visit, came. As father's business extended, our visiting list extended. The captains of his ships whose homes were elsewhere, brought their wives to be inconsolable with us after their departure on their voyages. We had ministers often, who always quarter at the best houses, and chance visitors to dinner and supper, who made our house a way-station. We had but small opportunity to cultivate family affinities; they were forever disturbed. Somebody was always sitting in the laps of our Lares and Penates, hiding them from us, There was another class of visitors deserving notice—those who preferred to occupy the kitchen and back chambers, humbly proud and bashfully arrogant people, who kept their hats and bonnets by them, and small bundles, to delude themselves and us with the idea that they "had not come to stay, and had no occasion for any attention." These people criticised us with insinuating severity, and proposed amendments with unrelenting affability. To this class Veronica was most attracted—it repelled me; consequently she was petted, and I was amiably sneered at.

This period of our family life has left no impression of dramatic interest. There was no development of the sentiments, no betrayal of the fluctuations of the passions which must have existed. There was no accident to reveal, no coincidence to surprise us. Hidden among the Powers That Be, which rule New England, lurks the Deity of the Illicit. This Deity never obtained sovereignty in the atmosphere where the Morgesons lived. Instead of the impression which my after experience suggests to me to seek, I recall an eternal smell of cookery, a

perpetual changing of beds, and the small talk of vacant minds.

Despite the rigors of Hepsey in the kitchen, and the careful supervision of Temperance, there was no systematic housekeeping. Mother had severe turns of planning, and making rules, falling upon us in whirlwinds of reform; but in a little time she let the band of habit snap back, and we resumed our former condition. She had no assistance from father in her ideas of change. It was enough for him to know that he had built a good house to shelter us, and to order the best that could be bought for us to eat and to wear. He liked, when he went where there were fine shops, to buy and bring home handsome shawls, bonnets, and dresses, wholly unsuited in general to the style and taste of each of us, but much handsomer than were needful for Surrey. They answered, however, as patterns for the plainer materials of our neighbors. He also bought books for us, recommended by their covers, or the opinion of the bookseller. His failing was to buy an immense quantity of everything he fancied.

"I shall never have to buy this thing again," he would say; "let us have enough."

Once ten large boxes of fancy soap came home, with a rose printed on each cake. I have now an aversion to roses, for I fancy I detect the smell of soap in them. Another time he bought twelve lace capes for mother and aunt Merce, all of the same shape.

Veronica and I grew up ignorant of practical or economical ways. We never saw money, never went shopping. Mother was indifferent in regard to many of the ordinary relations of life, which children are taught to understand. Father and mother both stopped at the same point with us, but for a different reason; father, because he saw nothing beyond the material, and mother, because her spiritual insight was confused and perplexing. But whatever a household may be, The Destinies spin a web to their will, out of the threads which drop hither and thither, floating in its atmosphere, white, black, or grey.

From the time we moved, therefore, we were a stirring, cheerful family, independent of each other by choice or occupation. In spite of our desultory tastes, however, some mutual habits were formed. When the want of society was felt, we sought the dining-room, sure of meeting some one with the same want. This room was large and central, connecting with the halls kitchen, and mother's room. It was a caravansary

where people dropped in and out on their way to some other place. Our most public moments were during meal-time. It was known that father was at home at breakfast and supper, and could be consulted. As he was away at our noon-day dinner, we were the least disturbed then, consequently it was a lawless, irregular, and unceremonious affair. Mother established her arm-chair here, and a stand for her work basket. Hepsey and Temperance were at hand; the men came here for orders, and it was convenient for the boy to transmit the local intelligence it was his vocation to collect. The windows commanded a view of the sea, the best view in the house, except from my room up-stairs. This prospect served mother for exercise. Her eyes roved over it when she wanted a little out-of-doors life. If she desired more variety, which was seldom, she went to the kitchen. After we moved she grew averse to leaving the house, except to go to church. She never quitted the dining-room after our supper till bed-time, because father rarely came from Milford, where he went on bank days, and indeed almost every other day, till late, and she liked to be by him while he ate his supper and smoked a cigar. All except Veronica frequented this room; but she was not missed or inquired for. She liked the parlor, because the piano was there. As soon as father had bought it she astonished us by a persistent fingering of the keys, which produced a feeble melody. She could soon play all the airs she had heard. When I saw what she could do, I refused to take music lessons, for while I was trying to learn "The White Cockade," she pushed me away, played it, and then made variations upon it. I pounded the keys with my fist, by way of a farewell to them, and told her that she should have the piano for her own.

CHAPTER VI.

One winter morning before daylight, Veronica came to my room, and asked me if I had heard any walking about the house during the night? She had, and was going to inquire about it. She soon returned with, "You have a brother. Temperance says my nose is broken. He will be like you, I suppose, and have everything he asks for. I don't care for

him; but," crying out with passion, "get up. Mother wants to see *you*, I know."

I dressed quickly, and went down stairs with a feeling of indignation that such an event should have happened without my knowledge.

There was an unwonted hush. A bright fire was burning on the dining room hearth, and the lamps were still lighted. Father was by the fire, smoking in a meditative manner. He put out his hand, which I did not take, and said, "Do you like his name—Arthur?"

"Yes," I mumbled, as I passed him, and went to the kitchen. Hepsey and Temperance were superintending the steeping of certain aromatic herbs, which stood round the fire, in silver porringers and earthern pitchers.

"Another Morgeson's come," said Temperance. "There's enough of them, such as they are—not but what they are good enough," correcting herself hastily.

"Go into your mother's room, softly," said Hepsey, rubbing her fingers against her thumb—her habit when she was in a tranquil frame of mind.

"*You* are mighty glad, Hepsey," said Temperance.

"Locke Morgeson ought to have a son," she replied, "to leave his money to."

"I vow," answered Temperance, "girls are thought nothing of in this 'ligious section; they may go to the poor house, as long as the sons have plenty."

An uncommon fit of shyness seized me, mixed with a feeling of dread, as I crept into the room where mother was. My eyes first fell upon an elderly woman, who wore a long, wide black apron, whose strings girded the middle of her cushion-like form. She was taking snuff. It was the widow Mehitable Allen, a lady whom I had often seen in other houses on similar occasions.

"Shoo," she whispered nasally.

I was arrested, but turned my eyes towards mother; hers were closed. Presently she murmured, "Thank God," opened them, and saw me. A smile lighted her pale countenance. "Cassy, my darling, kiss me. I am glad it is not a woman." As I returned her kiss her glance dropped on a small bunch by her side, which Mehitable took and deftly unrolled, informing me as she did so that it was a "Rouser."

Aunt Mercy came the next day. She had not paid us a visit in a long time, being confined at home with the care of her father, Grandfather Warren. She took charge of Veronica

and me, if taking charge means a series of guerilla skirmishes on both sides. I soon discovered, however, that she was prone to laughter, and that I could provoke it; we got on better after that discovery; but Veronica, disdaining artifice, was very cross with her. Aunt Mercy had a spark of fun in her composition, which was not quite crushed out by her religious education. She frequented the church oftener than mother, sang more hymns, attended all the anniversary celebrations, but she had no dreams, no enthusiasm. Her religion had levelled all needs, and all aspirations. What the day brought forth answered for her. Older than mother, she inspired me with a secret pity on one point; I knew she carried in her bosom the knowledge that she was an old maid.

Before mother left her room Veronica was taken ill, and was not convalescent till spring. Delicacy of constitution the doctor called her disorder. She had no strength, no appetite, and looked more elfish than ever. She would not stay in bed, and could not sit up, so father had a chair made for her, in which she could recline comfortably. Aunt Merce put her in it every morning, and took her out of it every evening. My presence irritated her so I visited her but seldom. She said I looked so well, it hurt her; and she wished me to keep out of her sight, and begged me never to talk loud in the vicinity of her room, my voice was so breezy. She amused herself in her own strange way. One of her amusements, was to cut off her hair, lock by lock. It was cut short before she was well enough to walk about. She played on a jew's-harp, and on a little fife when her breath permitted, and invented grotesque costumes out of bits of silk and lace. Temperance was much engaged, at her dictation, in the composition of elaborate dishes, which she never ate, but forced Temperance to. She was more patient with her than with any other person; with us she was excessively high-tempered, especially with father, who seldom ventured near her. She could not bear to catch a glimpse of the sea, nor to hear it; when we heard it echoing in the house, she played on her fife, or jew's-harp, or asked Aunt Merce to sing some old song. But she liked the view from the north windows, even when the boughs were bare, and the fields barren. When the grass came, she ordered handfuls to be brought her and put in saucers of water. With the coming of the blossoms she began to mend. As for me, I was as much an animal as ever—robust in health—inattentive, and seeking excitement and exhilaration. I went everywhere, to Bible Class, to Sunday School, and to every funeral which

took place within our precincts. But I never looked upon the dead; perhaps that sight would have marred the slumbrous security which possessed me—an instinctive faith in the durability of my own powers of life. This feeling was a correlative of that which makes us antipathetic to sick people.

But a change was approaching. Aunt Merce considered my present state a hopeless one. She was outside the orbit of the family planet, and might have felt the tendency of its revolutions, perceiving that father and mother were absorbed in their individual affairs. She called mother's attention to my non-improvement, and proposed that I should return to Barmouth with her, to stay a year and become a pupil in a young lady's school, which had been recently established there, by a graduate of the Nipswich Female Seminary, a school distinguished for its ethics. Mother looked astonished, when she heard this proposal. "What!" she began with vehemence, "shall I subject"—but checked herself when she caught my eye, and continued more calmly: "We will decide soon."

It was decided that I should go, and without my being consulted in the matter. I felt resentful against mother afterwards, and could not understand why she had consented to my going. It was because she wished me to comprehend the influences of her early life, and to learn some of the lessons she had been taught. At first father "poohed" at the plan, but finally he said it was a good place to tame me, and I should try 't. When Veronica heard that I was going, she told me that I would be stifled, if I lived at grandfather Warren's; but added, that the plums in his garden were good, and advised me to sit on the yellow stone door step, under which the toads lived. She also informed me that she was glad I was going, and hoped I would stay for ever. Mother looked over my clothes, repeating many precepts which she had doubtless heard in youth, and which my future prospect recalled to her mind, the whole forming, as it were, a mild introductory letter for me to present to grandfather Warren, provided I would profit by it.

To Barmouth I went, and in May entered Miss Black's genteel school. Miss Black had a conviction that her vocation was teaching. Necessity did not compel it, for she was connected with one of the richest families in Barmouth. At the end of the week my curiosity regarding my new position was quenched, and I dropped into the depths of my first wretchedness. I frantically demanded of father, who had stopped to see me on his way to Milford, to be taken home. He firmly resisted

me. Once a month I should go home and spend a Sunday, if I chose, and he would come to Barmouth every week.

My agitation and despair clouded his face for a moment, but it cleared, and pinching my chin, he said, "Why don't you look like your mother?'

"But she *is* like her mother," said aunt Merce.

"As she might have been ages ago."

"Hush, Locke."

"Well, Cassy, good bye;" and he gave me a kiss with cruel nonchalence. I knew my year must be staid out.

CHAPTER VII.

My life at grandfather Warren's was one kind of penance, and my life in Miss Black's school another. Both were different from my former life. My filaments found no nourishment, creeping between the two; but the fibres of youth are strong, and they did not perish. Grandfather Warren's house, now that I lived in it, reminded me of the casket which imprisoned the Geni. I felt that I had let loose a Presence I had no power over—the embodiment of its gloom, its sternness, and its silence.

With feeling comes observation; after that, one reasons. I began to observe. I found that aunt Mercy was not the aunt Merce I had known at home. She wore a mask before her father. There was constraint between them; each repressed the other. The result of this mutual relation was a formal, petrifying, unyielding system. A system, which, from the fact of its satisfying neither, was kept up the more rigidly; on the one side from a morbid conscience, which reiterated its monitions against the dictates of the natural heart; on the other out of respect and timidity.

Grandfather Warren was a little, lean, leather-colored man. His head was habitually bent, his eyes cast down; but when he raised them to peer about, their sharpness and clear intelligence gave his face a wonderful vitality. He chafed his small, well-shaped hands continually; his long polished nails clicked together with a shelly noise, like that which beetles make flying

against the ceiling. His features were delicate and handsome; gentle blood ran in his veins, as I have said. All classes in Barmouth treated him with invariable courtesy, though they were not aware of this fact. But he was aboriginal in character, not to be moved by antecedent, or changed by innovation—a Puritan, without gentleness or tenderness. He scarcely concealed his contempt for the emollients of life, or for those who needed them. He whined over no misfortune, pined for no pleasure. His two sons, who broke loose from him, went into the world, lived a wild, merry life, and died there, he never named. He found his wife dead by his side one morning. He did not go frantic, but selected a text for the funeral sermon; and when he stood by the uncovered grave, took off his hat and thanked his friends for their kindness with a loud, steady voice. Aunt Mercy told me that after her mother's death his habit of chafing his hands commenced; it was all the difference she saw in him, for he never spoke of his trouble, or acknowledged his grief by word or sign.

Though he had been frugal and industrious all his life, he had no more property than the old, rambling house we lived in, and a long, narrow garden attached to it, where there were a few plum and quince trees, a row of currant bushes, aunt Mercy's beds of chamomile and sage, and a few flowers. At the end of the garden was a peaked-roof pig sty; it was cleanly kept, and its inhabitant had his meals served with the regularity which characterized all that grand'ther Warren did. Beautiful pigeons lived in the roof, and were on friendly terms with the occupant on the lower floor. The house was not unpicturesque. It was built on a corner, and faced the streets, without offering them the apology of a yard for interposition. One front was a story high, with a slanting roof; the other, which was two-storied, sloped like a giraffe's back, down to a wood-shed, which was kept orderly. Clean cobwebs hung from its rafters, and neat heaps of fragrant chips were piled on the floor.

The house had many rooms, all more or less dark and irregularly shaped. The construction of the chambers was involved. I could not get out of one without going into another. Some of the ceilings slanted suddenly, and some so gradually that where I could stand erect, and where I must stoop, I never remembered, until my head was unpleasantly grazed, or my eyes filled with flakes of ancient lime dust. A long chamber in the middle of the house was the shop. It always smelt

of woolen shreds. At sunset, summer and winter, aunt Mercy sprinkled water on the unpainted floor, and swept it. I usually followed her wherever she went. While she swept I made my thumb sore, by snipping the bits of cloth that were scattered on the long counter by the window with grand'ther's shears, whose bows were covered with green flannel; or I scrawled figures with gray chalk, where I thought they might catch his eye. When she had finished sweeping she carefully sorted the scraps, and put them into boxes under the counter; then she neatly rolled up the brown paper curtains, which had been let down to exclude the afternoon sun; shook the old patch-work cushions in the osier-bottomed chairs; watered the rose-geranium and the monthly rose, which flourished wonderfully in that fluffy atmosphere; set every pin and needle in its place, and shut the door, which was opened again at sunrise. Of late years grand'ther's occupation had declined. No new customers came. A few, who did not change the fashion of their garb, still patronized him. His income was barely three hundred dollars a year—eked out to this amount by some small pay for offices connected with the church, of which he was a prominent member. From this income he paid his pulpit tithe, gave to the poor, and lived independent and respectable. Mother endeavored in an unobtrusive way to add to his comfort; but he would only accept a few herrings from the Surrey Ware every spring, and a basket of apples every fall. He invariably returned her presents by giving her a share of his plums and quinces.

I had only seen grand'ther Warren at odd intervals. He rarely came to our house; when he did, he rode down on the top of the Barmouth stage coach, returning in a few hours. As mother never liked to go to Barmouth, she seldom came to see me.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was five o'clock on Saturday afternoon when Father left me. Aunt Mercy continued her preparations for tea, and when it was ready, went to the foot of the stairs, and called, "Supper." Grand'ther came down immediately, followed by two tall, cadaverous women, Ruth and Sally Aikin, tailoresses, who sewed for him in the spring and fall. Living several

miles from Barmouth, they staid through the week, but went home on Saturday night, and returned on Monday morning. We stood behind the heavy oak chairs round the table, one of which grand'ther tipped backwards, and said a long grace, not a word of which was heard; for his teeth were gone, and he prayed in his throat. Aunt Mercy's "Moltee" rubbed against me, with her back and tail erect. I pinched the latter and she gave a wail. Aunt Mercy passed her hand across her mouth, but the eyes of the two women were stony in their sockets. Grand'ther ended his grace with an upward jerk of his head, and we seated ourselves. He looked sharply at me, his gray eyebrows rising hair by hair, and shaking an iron spoon, said "You are playing over your mother's capers."

"The caper-bush grows on the shores of the Mediterranean sea, grand'ther. Miss Black had it for a theme, out of the Penny Magazine; it is full of themes."

"She had better give you a gospel theme."

He was as inarticulate when he quoted Scripture as when he prayed, but I heard something about "thorns;" then he helped us to baked Indian pudding—our invariable Saturday night's repast. Aunt Mercy passed cups of tea; I heard the gulping swallow of it in every throat, the silence was so profound. After the pudding we had dried apple-pie, which we ate from our hands, like bread. Grand'ther ate fast, not troubling himself to ask us if we would have more, but making the necessary motions to that effect, by touching the spoon in the pudding, or the knife on the pie. Ruth and Sally still kept their eyes fixed on some invisible object at a distance. What a disagreeable interest I felt in them! What had they in common with me? What could they enjoy? How unpleasant their dingy, crumbled, needle-pricked fingers were! Sally hiccoughed, and Ruth suffered from internal rumblings. Without waiting for each other when we had finished, we put our chairs against the wall and left the room. I rushed into the garden, and trampled the chamomile bed. I had heard that it grew faster for being subjected to that process, and thought of the two women I had just seen, while I crushed the spongy weeds. Had they been trampled upon? A feeling of pity stung me; I ran into the house, and found them on the point of departure, with little bundles in their hands.

"Aunt Mercy will let me carry your bundles a part of the way for you; shall I?"

"No, indeed," said Ruth, in a mild voice; "there's no heft in them; they are mites to carry."

"Besides," chimed Sally, "you could'nt be trusted with them."

"Are they worth anything?' I inquired, noticing then that both wore better dresses, and that the bundles contained their shop gowns.

"What made you pinch the moltee's tail?" asked Sally. "If you pinched my cat's tail, I would give you a sound whipping."

"How could she, Sally," said Ruth, "when our cat's tail is cut short off?"

"For all the world," remarked Sally, "that's the only way she can be managed. If things are cut off, and kept out of sight, or never mentioned before her, she may behave very well; not otherwise."

"Good bye, Miss Ruth and Sally, good bye," modulating my voice to accents of grief, and making a "cheese."

They retreated with a less staid pace than usual, and I sought aunt Mercy, who was preparing the Sunday's dinner. Twilight drew near, and the Sunday's cloud began to fall on my spirits. Between sun-down and nine o'clock was a tedious interval. I was not allowed to go to bed, nor to read a secular book, or to amuse myself with anything. A dim oil lamp burned on the high shelf of the middle room, our ordinary gathering place. Aunt Mercy sat there, rocking in a low chair; the doors were open, and I wandered softly about. The smell of the garden herbs came in faintly, and now and then I heard a noise in the water butt under the spout, the snapping of an old rafter, or something falling behind the wall. The toads crawled from under the plantain leaves, and hopped across the broad stone before the kitchen door, and the irreverent cat, with whom I sympathized, raced like mad in the grass. Growing duller, I went to the cellar door, which was in the front entry, opened it, and stared down into the black gulf, till I saw a gray rock rise at the foot of the stairs, which affected my imagination. The foundation of the house was on the spurs of a great granite bed, which rose from the Surrey shores, dipped, and cropped out in the centre of Barmouth. It came through the ground again in the wood house, smooth and round, like the bald head of some old Titan, and in the border of the garden it burst through in narrow ridges, full of seams. As I contemplated the rock, and inhaled a mouldy atmosphere whose component parts were charcoal and potatoes, I heard the first stroke of the nine o'clock bell, which hung in the belfry of the church across the street. Although it was so near us that we

could hear the bell-rope whistle in its grooves, and its last hoarse breath in the belfry, there was no reverberation of its clang in the house; the rock under us struck back its voice. It was an old Spanish bell, aunt Mercy told me. How it reached Barmouth she did not know. I recognized its complaining voice afterwards. It told me it could never forget it had been baptized a Catholic; and it pined for the beggar who rang it in the land of fan-leaved chestnuts! It would growl and strangle as much as possible in the hands of Benjamin Beals, the bell-ringer and coffin-maker of Barmouth. Except in the morning when it called me up, I was glad to hear it. It was the signal of time past; the oftener I heard it, the nearer I was to the end of my year. Before it ceased to ring now aunt Mercy called me, in a low voice. I returned to the middle room, and took a seat in one of the oak chairs, whose back of upright rods was my nightly penance. Aunt Mercy took the lamp from the shelf, and placed it upon a small oak stand, where the Bible lay. Grand'ther entered, and sitting by the stand read a chapter. His voice was like opium. Presently my head rolled across the rods, and I felt conscious of slipping down the glassy seat. After he had read the chapter he prayed. If the chapter had been long, the prayer was short; if the chapter had been short, the prayer was long. When he had ceased praying he left the room without speaking, and betook himself to bed. Aunt Mercy dragged me up the steep stairs, undressed me, and I crept into bed, drugged with a monotony which served but to deepen the sleep of youth and health. When the bell rang the next morning, aunt Mercy gave me a preparatory shake, before she began to dress, and while she walked up and down the room lacing her stays, entreated me to get up, persisting in her entreaties till she had dressed, and was on the stairs. When the door was shut behind her, I knew that I must be ready for morning prayers.

If the word lively could ever be used in reference to our life, it might be in regard to Sunday. The well was so near the church that the house was used as an inn for the accommodation of the church goers who lived at any distance, and who did not return home between the morning and afternoon services. A regular set took dinner with us, and there were parties who brought lunch, which they ate off their handkerchiefs, on their knees It was also a watering place for the Sunday-school scholars, who filed in troops before the pail in the well-room, and drank from the cocoa-nut dipper. When the weather was warm our parlor was open, as it was to-day.

Aunt Mercy had dusted it, and ornamented the hearth with bunches of lilacs in a broken pitcher. Twelve yellow chairs, a mahogany stand, a dark rag carpet, some speckled Pacific sea-shells on the shelf, among which stood a whale's tooth with a drawing of a cranky ship thereon, and an ostrich's egg that hung by a string from the ceiling, were the adornments of the room. When we were dressed for church, we looked out of the window till the bell tolled, and the chaise of the Baxters and Sawyers had driven to the gate; then we went ourselves. Grand'ther had preceded us, and was already in his seat. Aunt Mercy went up to the head of the pew, a little out of breath from the tightness of her dress, and the ordeal of the Baxter and Sawyer eyes, for the pew, though off a side aisle, was in the neighborhood of the élite of the church: a clove, however, tranquilized her. I fixed my feet on a cricket, and examined the bonnets. The house filled rapidly, and last of all the minister entered, followed by a numerous progeny. He went into the pulpit, and was lost to the sight. The singers began an anthem, singing in an advanced style of the art, I observed, for they shouted '*Armen*,' while our singers in Surrey bellowed '*Amen*.' When the sermon began I settled myself into a vague speculation concerning my future days of freedom; but my dreams were disturbed by the conduct of the Hickspold boys, who were in a pew in front of us. At its foot was Mr. Hickspold, devout and nervous, and Mrs. Hickspold was phlegmatic and drowsy at its head. The boys kicked and pinched each other, gnawed the rail of our pew, made faces at me, and appeared to be in wretched spirits. In the closing hymn they grew more amiable, and watched their father's hand on the button of the pew door, ready to rush at the last word of the benediction. As in the morning, so in the afternoon, and all the Sundays of the year. The variations of the season served but to deepen the uniformity of my heart-sickness.

CHAPTER IX.

Aunt Mercy had not introduced me to Miss Black as the daughter of Locke Morgeson, the richest man in Surrey, but simply as her neice. Her pride prevented her from making any exhibition of my antecedents, which was wise, considering that I had none. My grandfather, John Morgeson,

was a nobody,—merely a 'Co;' and though my great-grandfather, Locke Morgeson, was worthy to be called a Somebody, it was not his destiny to make a stir in the world. Father was a new man. Many of the families of my Barmouth schoolmates had the fulcrum of a monied grandfather. The knowledge of the girls did not extend to that period in the family history when its patriarchs started in the pursuit of Gain. Elmira Sawyer, one of Miss Black's pupils, never heard that her grandfather, "Black Peter," as he was called, had made excursions, in an earlier part of his life, on the river Congo; or that he was familiar with the soundings of Loango Bay. As he returned from his voyages, bringing more and more money, he enlarged his estate, and grew more and more respectable, retiring at last from the sea, to become a worthy landsman; he paid taxes to church and state, and even had a silver communion cup, among the pewter service used on the occasion of the Lord's Supper; but he never was brought to the approval of that project of the Congregational Churches,—the Colonization of the Blacks to Liberia. Neither was Hersilia Allen aware that the pink calico in which I first saw her was remotely owing to West India Rum. Nor did Charlotte Alden, the proudest girl in school, know that her grandfather's, Squire Alden's, stepping stone to fortune was the loss of the brig "Capricorn," which was wrecked in the vicinity of a comfortable port, on her passage out to the whaling ground. An auger had been added to the meagre outfit, and long after the sea had leaked through the hole bored through her bottom, and swallowed her, and the insurance had been paid, the truth leaked out that the captain had received instructions, which had been fulfilled. Whereupon two Insurance Companies went to law with him, and a suit ensued, which ended in their paying costs, in addition to what they had before paid Squire Alden, who winked in a derisive manner at the Board of Directors, when he received its check.

There were others who belonged in the category of Decayed Families, and who were as exclusive as they were shabby. There was also a list of parvenus, which included myself. By the time I entered the school it was divided into clans, each with its spites, jealousies, and emulations. Its esprit de corps, however, was developed by my arrival; the girls united against me, and though I perceived, when I compared myself with them, that they were partly right in their opinions, their ridicule and contempt stupefied and crushed me. They were trained, intelligent, and adroit; I was uncouth, ignorant, and

without tact. It was impossible for Miss Black not to be affected by the general feeling in regard to me. Her pupils knew sooner than I did, that she sympathized with them in their opinions. She embarrassed me, when I should have despised her. At first her regimen surprised, then filled me with a dumb, clouded anger, which made me appear apathetic.

Miss Emily Black was a young woman, and, I thought, a handsome one. She had crenulated black hair, large black eyes, a Roman nose, and long white teeth. She bit her nails when annoyed, and when her superiority made her perceive the mental darkness of others, she laughed often. Being pious, she conducted her school after the theologic pattern of the Nipswich Seminary, at which she had been educated. She opened the school each day with a religious exercise, reading, in an unnatural voice, something from the Bible, and commenting upon it, or questioning us regarding our ideas of what she read. She often selected the character of David, and was persistent in her efforts to explain and reconcile the discrepancies in the history of the royal Son of Israel

"Miss *C.* Morgeson, we will call you," she said in our first interview; "the name of Cassandra is too peculiar."

"My grandfather Locke liked the name; my sister's is Veronica; do you like that better?"

"It is of no consequence in the premises what your sister may be named," she replied, running her eye over me. "What will she study, Miss Warren?"

Aunt Mercy's recollections of my studies were dim, and her knowledge of my school days was not calculated to prepossess a teacher in my favor; but after a moment's delay, she said: "What you think best."

"Very well," she answered; "I will endeavor to fulfil my Christian duty towards her. We will return to the school room."

We had held the conversation in the porch, and now aunt Mercy gave me a nod of encouragement, and bidding Miss Black, "Good day," departed, looking behind her as long as possible. I followed my teacher. As she opened the door forty eyes were levelled at me; my hands were in my way suddenly; my feet impeded my progress; how should I pass that wall of eyes? A wisp of my dry, rough hair fell on my neck and tickled it; as I tried to poke it under my comb, I glanced at the faces before me. How spirited and delicate they were! The creatures had their heads dressed as if they were at a party—in curls, or braids and ribbons. An open,

blank, *noli me tangere* expression met my perturbed glance. I stood still, but my head went round. Miss Black mounted her desk, and surveyed the school-room. "Miss Charlotte Alden, the desk next you is vacant; Miss C. Morgeson, the new pupil, may take it."

Miss Charlotte answered, "Yes mim," and ostentatiously swept away an accumulation of pencils, sponges, papers and books, to make room for me. I took the seat, previously stumbling against her, whereat all the girls, whose regards were immediately fixed upon me, smiled. That was my initiation.

The first day I was left to myself, to make interested but unimpassioned studies. The school room was in the vestry of the church, a building between it and grand'ther's house. Each girl had a small desk before her. Miss Black occupied a high stool in a square box, which served for the minister when meetings were held; at its back was his seat, a low bench, where she heard single recitations, or lectured a pupil. The vestry yard, where the girls romped, and exercised with skipping ropes, a swing, and a set of tilting boards, commanded a view of grand'ther's premises; our street windows were exposed to the raking fire of their eyes and tongues.

I observed that the dress and manners of the girls differed from mine. Their manners were regulated by the impression they wished to make upon each other, not by any innate principle. The fact of their being well dressed aided me to the discovery that I was ignorant of the art of dress. My clothes were ill-made, clumsy, and of inappropriate colors; theirs were stylish, harmonious, and worn with an ease which testified to the habit of considering the toilet a necessary accomplishment.

After I went home I examined myself in the glass, and drew an unfavorable conclusion from the inspection. My hair was parted zig-zag; one shoulder was higher than the other; my dress came up to my chin, and slipped down to my shoulder blades. I was all waist; no hips were developed; my hands were red, and my nails were chipped. I opened the trunk where my wardrobe was packed; what belonged to me was comfortable, in reference to weather and the wash, but not pretty. I found I had a molasses-colored silk, called Turk satin—one of mother's old dresses, made over for me, or an invidious selection of hers from the purchases of father, who sometimes made a mistake in taste, owing to the misrepresentations of shop-keepers and milliners. While thus engaged,

aunt Mercy came to look for me, and began to scold when she saw that I had tumbled my clothes out of the trunk.

"Aunt Mercy, these things are horrid, all of them. Look at this shawl," and I unrolled a square silk fabric, the color of a sick orange. "Where did this come from?"

"Saints upon earth!" she exclaimed, "your father bought it at the best store in New York. It was costly."

"Now tell me, why do the pantalettes of those girls look so graceful? They do not twirl round the ankle like a rope, as mine do."

"I can't say," she answered with a sigh. "But you ought to wear long dresses; yours are tucked, and could be let down."

"And these red prunella boots—they look like boiled crabs" I put them on, and walked round the room crab-fashion, till she laughed hysterically. "Miss Charlotte Alden wears French kid slippers every day, and I must wear mine."

"No," she said, "you must only wear them to church."

"I shall talk to father about that, when he comes here next."

"Cassy, did Charlotte Alden speak to you to-day?"

"No; but she made an acquaintance by stares."

"Well, never mind her if she says anything unpleasant to you; the Aldens are a high set."

"Are they higher than we are in Surrey? Have they heard of my father, who is equal to the President?"

"We are all equal in the sight of God."

"You do not look as if you thought so, aunt Mercy. Why do you say things in Barmouth, you never said in Surrey?"

"Come down stairs, Cassandra, and help me finish the dishes."

Our conversation was ended; but I still had my thoughts on the clothes question, and revolved my plans.

After the morning exercises the next day, Miss Black called me in to her desk. "I think," she said, "you had better study Geology. It is important, for it will lead your mind up from nature to nature's God. My young ladies have finished their studies in that direction; therefore you will recite alone, once a day."

"Yes 'em," I replied; but it was the first time that I had heard of Geology. The compendium she gave me must have been dull and dry; I could not get its lessons perfectly. It never inspired me with any interest for land or sea. I could not associate any of its terms, or descriptions, with the great rock under grand'ther's house. It was not for Miss Black to

open the nodules of my understanding, with her hammer-like mode of instruction. She proposed Botany also. The young ladies had made botanical excursions to the fields and woods outside Barmouth ; I might as well join the class at once. It was now in the family of the Legumes. I accompanied the class on one excursion. Not a soul appeared to know that I was present, and I declined going again. Composition I must write once a month. A few more details closed the interview. I mentioned in it that father desired me to study arithmetic. Miss Black placed me in a class ; but her interests were in the higher, and more elegant branches of education. I made no more advance in the humble walks of learning, than in those adorned by the dissection of flowers, the disruption of rocks, or the graces of composition. Though I entered upon my duties under protest, I soon became accustomed to their routine, and the rest of my life seemed more like a dream of the future, than a realization of the present. I refused to go home at the end of the month. I preferred waiting, I said, to the end of the year. I was not urged to change my mind ; neither was I applauded for my resolution. The day that I could have gone home, I asked father to drive me to Milford, on the opposite side of the river which ran by Barmouth. I shut my eyes tight, when the horse struck the boards of the long wooden bridge between the towns, and opened them when we stopped at an inn by the water side of Milford. Father took me into a parlor, where sat a handsome, fat woman, hemming towels.

" Is that you, Morgeson ?" she said. " Is this your daughter ?"

" Yes ; can I leave her with you, while I go to the bank ? She has not been here before."

" Lord ha' mercy on us, you clip her wings, don't you ? Come here, child, and let me pull off your pelisse."

I went to her with a haughty air ; it did not please me to hear my father called ' Morgeson,' by a person unknown to me. She understood my expression, and looked up at father ; they both smiled, and I was vexed with him for his unwarrantable familiarity. Pinching my cheek with her fat fingers, which were covered with red and green rings, she said, " We shall do very well together. What a pretty silk pelisse, and silver buckles, too."

After father went out, and my bonnet was disposed of, Mrs. Tabor gave me a huge piece of delicious sponge cake, which softened me somewhat.

" What is your name, dear ?'

"Morgeson."

"It is easy to see that."

"Well, Cassandra."

"Oh, what a lovely name," and she drew from her work-basket a paper-covered book; "there is no name in this novel half so pretty; I wish the heroine's name had been Cassandra, instead of Aldebrante."

"Let me see it," I begged.

"There is a horrid monk in it;" but she gave it to me, and was presently called out. I devoured its pages, and for the only time in that year of Barmouth life, I forgot my own wants and woes. She saw my interest in the book when she came back, and coaxed it from me, offering me more cake, which I accepted. She told me that she had known father for years, and that he kept his horse at the inn stables, and dined with her. "But I never knew that he had a daughter," she continued. "Are you the only child?"

"I have a sister," and after a moment remembered that I had a brother, too; but did not think it a fact necessary to mention.

"I have no children."

"But you have novels to read."

She laughed, and by the time father returned we were quite chatty. After dinner I asked him to go to some shops with me. He took me to a jeweller's, and without consulting me bought an immense mosaic brooch, with a ruined castle on it, and a pretty ring with a gold stone.

"Is there anything more?" he asked.

"Yes, I want a pink calico dress."

"Why?"

"Because the girls at Miss Black's wear pink calico."

"Why not get a pink silk?"

"I must have a pink French calico, with a three-cornered white cloud on it; it is the fashion."

"The fashion!" he echoed with contempt. But the dress was bought, and we went back to Barmouth.

When I appeared in school with my new brooch and ring the girls crowded round me.

"What does that pin represent, whose estate?" inquired one, with envy in her voice.

"Don't the ring make the blood rush into your hand?" asked another; "it looks so."

"Does it?" I answered; "I'll hold up my hand in the air, as you do, to make it white."

"What is your father's business?" asked Elmira Sawyer, "is he a tailor?"

Her insolence made my head swim; but I did not reply. When recess was over a few minutes afterwards, I cried under the lid of my desk. These girls overpowered me, for I could not conciliate them, and had no idea of revenge, believing that their ridicule was deserved. But I thought I should like to prove myself respectable. How could I? Grand'ther *was* a tailor, and I could not demean myself by assuring them that my father was a gentleman.

In the course of a month aunt Mercy had my pink calico made up by the best dressmaker in Barmouth. When I put it on I thought I looked better than I ever had before, and went into school triumphantly with it. The girls surveyed me in silence; but they criticised me. At last Charlotte Alden asked me in a whisper if old Mr. Warren made my dress. She wrote on a piece of paper, in large letters—"Girls, don't lets wear our pink calicoes again," and pushing it over to Elmira Sawyer, made signs that the paper should be passed to all the girls. They read it, and turning to Charlotte Alden nodded. I watched the paper as it made its round, and saw Mary Bennett drop it on the floor with a giggle.

It was a rainy day, and we passed the recess in-doors. I remained quiet, looking over my lesson. "The first period ends with the carboniferous system; the second includes the saliferous and magnesean systems; the third comprises the öolitic and chalk systems; the fourth"— "How attentive some people are to their lessons," I heard Charlotte Alden say. Looking up I saw her near me with Elmira Sawyer.

"What is that you say?" I asked sharply.

"I am not speaking to you."

"I am angry," I said in a low tone, and rising.

"Who are *you* that you should be angry? We have heard about your mother, when she was in love, poor thing."

I struck her so violent a blow in the face, that she staggered backwards "You are a liar," I said, "and you must let me alone." Elmira Sawyer turned white, and moved away. I threw my book at her; it hit her head, and her comb was broken by my geological systems. There was a stir; Miss Black hurried from her desk, saying, "Young ladies, what does this mean? Miss C. Morgeson, your temper equals your vulgarity, I find. Take your seat in my desk."

I obeyed her, and as we passed Mary Bennett's desk where I saw the paper fall, I picked it up. "See the good

manners of your favorite, Miss Black; read it." She bit her lips as she glanced over it, turned back as if to speak to Charlotte Alden, looked at me again, and went on. "Sit down, Miss C. Morgeson, and reflect on the blow you have given; will you ask pardon?"

"I will not; you know that."

"I have never resorted to severe punishment yet; but I fear I shall be obliged to in your case."

"Let me go from here." I clenched my hands, and tried to get up. She held me down on the seat, and we looked close into each other's eyes. "You are a bad girl." "And you are a bad woman," I replied; "mean and cruel." She made a motion to strike me, but her hand dropped; I felt my nostrils quiver strangely. "For shame," she said in a tremulous voice, and turned away. I sat on the bench at the back of the desk, heartily tired, till school was dismissed; as Charlotte Alden passed out, courtesying, Miss Black said she hoped she would extend a Christian forgiveness to Miss C. Morgeson, for her unlady-like behavior. "Miss C. Morgeson is a peculiar case."

She gave her a meaning look, which was not lost upon me. Charlotte answered "Certainly," and bowed to me gracefully, whereat I felt a fresh sense of my demerits, and concluded that I was worsted in the fray.

Miss Black asked no explanation of the affair; it was dropped, and none of the girls alluded to it by hint or look afterward. When I told aunt Mercy of it, she turned pale, and said she knew what Charlotte Alden meant, and that perhaps mother would tell me in good time.

"We had a good many troubles in our young days, Cassy."

CHAPTER X.

The atmosphere of my two lives was so different, that when I passed into one, the other ceased to affect me. I forgot all that I suffered and hated at Miss Black's, as soon as I crossed the threshold, and entered grand'ther's house. The difference kept up a healthy mean; either alone, would perhaps have been more than I could then have sustained. All that year my life was narrowed to that house, my school, and the church. Father offered to take me to ride, when he came to Barmouth, or

to carry me to Milford ; but the motion of the carriage, and the conveying power of the horse, created such a fearful and realizing sense of escape, that I gave up riding with him Aunt Mercy seldom left home ; my schoolmates did not invite me to visit them ; the sea shore was too distant for me to ramble there ; the storehouses and wharves by the river side offered no agreeable saunterings ; and the street, in aunt Mercy's estimation, was not the place for an idle promenade. My exercise, therefore, was confined to the garden—a pleasant spot, now that midsummer had come, and inhabited with winged and crawling creatures, with whom I claimed companionship, especially with the red, furry caterpillars, that have, alas, nearly passed away, and given place to a variegated, fantastic tribe, which gentleman farmers are fond of writing about.

Mother rode over to Barmouth occasionally, but seemed more glad when she went away, than when she came. Veronica came with her once, but said she would come no more while I was there. She, too, would wait till the end of the year, for I spoiled the place. She said this so calmly, that I never thought of being offended by it. I told her the episode of the pink calico. "It is a lovely color," she said, when I showed it to her "If you like, I will take it home and burn it."

As I developed the dramatic part of my story—the blow given Charlotte Alden, Verry rubbed her face shrinkingly, as if she had felt the blow. "Let me see your hand," she asked ; "did I ever strike anybody ?"

"You threw a pail of salt down stairs, once, upon my head, and put out my sight."

"I wish, when you come home, you would pound Mr. Park ; he talks too much about the Resurrection. And," she added mysteriously, "he likes mother."

"Likes mother !" I said aghast.

"He watches her so when she holds Arthur ! Why do you stare at me ? Why do I talk to you ? I am going. Now mind, I shall never leave home to go to any school ; I shall know enough without."

While Veronica was holding this placable talk with me, I noted that she had the high-bred air, the absence of which I deplored in myself.

How cool and unimpressionable she looked ! There was nothing in her face and bearing to provoke that nameless curiosity which leads us to experiment upon, and excite one's emotions. She did not attract me. My mind wandered to what I had heard Mary Bennett say, in recess one day, that her bro

ther had seen me in church, and came home with the opinion that I was the handsomest girl in Miss Black's school.

"Is it possible!"-replied the girl to whom she had made the remark. "I never should think of calling her pretty."

"Stop, Veronica," I called; "am I pretty?" She turned back. "Everybody in Surrey says so; and everybody says I am not." And she banged the door against me.

She did not come to Barmouth again. She was ill in the winter, and father said she was queerer than ever, and more trouble. The summer passed, and I had no particular torment, except Miss Black's tormenting me in reference to Composition. I could not do justice to the themes she gave us, not having the books from which she took them at command. I betrayed an ignorance which excited her utmost contempt, on "The Scenery of Singapore," "The Habits of the Hottentots," and "The Relative Merits of Homer and Virgil."

In October Sally and Ruth Aiken came for the fall sewing. They had farmed it all summer, they said, and were tanned so deep a hue, that their faces bore no small resemblance to ham. Ruth brought me some apples in an ochre-colored bag, and Sally eyed me with her old severity. As they took their accustomed seats at the table, I thought they had swallowed the interval of time which had gone by since they left, so precisely the same was the moment of their leaving, and that of their coming back. I knew grand'ther no better than when I saw him first. He was sociable to those who visited the house; but never with those abiding in his family. Me, he never noticed, except when I ate less than usual; then he peered into my face, and said, "What ails you?" We had the benefit of his taciturn presence continually, for he rarely went out; and although he did not interfere with aunt Mercy's work, he supervised it, weighed and measured every article that was used, and kept the cellar and garden in perfect order.

It was approaching the season of killing the pig, and he conferred often with aunt Mercy on the subject. The weather was watched, and the pig poked daily, in the hope that the fat was thickening on his ribs. When the day of his destiny arrived, there was almost confusion in the house, and for a week after, of evenings, grand'ther went about with a lantern, and was not himself till a new occupant was obtained for the vacant pen, and all his idiosyncrasies revealed and understood. The sausages and ham which we had shortly after, formed an era in our living, and grand'ther sarcastically remarked—that I

did not despise the pig now, though I had laughed at him alive, and at his being kept in the garden.

"I don't laugh, grand'ther, at your beautiful pigeons, that live in the pig-sty roof; it is just the place for them."

"Yes," he answered, briskly rubbing his hands, "but they eat the pig's corn, and I can't afford that; I shall have to shoot them, I guess."

"Oh, don't, grand'ther."

"I will, this very day. Where's the gun, Mercy?"

In an hour the pigeons were shot, except two which had flown away.

"Why did you ask him not to shoot the pigeons?" said aunt Mercy. "If you had said nothing, he would not have done it."

"He is a disagreeable relation," I answered, "and I am glad he is a tailor."

Aunt Mercy reproved me; but the loss of the pigeons vexed her. Perhaps grand'ther thought so, for that night he asked after her geraniums, and told her that a gardener had promised him some fine slips for her. She looked pleased, but did not thank him. There was already a beautiful stand of flowers in the middle room, which was odorous the year round with their perfume.

The weather was now cold, and we congregated about the fire; for there was no other comfortable room in the house. One afternoon, when I was digging in aunt Mercy's geranium pots, and picking off the dead leaves, two deacons came to visit grand'ther, and, hovering over the fire with him, complained of the lukewarmness of the church brethren in regard to the spiritual condition of the Society. A shower of grace was needed; there were reviving symptoms in some of the neighboring churches, but none in Barmouth. Something must be done—a fast-day appointed, or especial prayer meetings held. This was on Saturday; the next day the ceremony of the Lord's Supper would take place, and grand'ther recommended that the minister should be asked to suggest something to the church, which might remove it from its hardness.

"Are the vessels scoured, Mercy?" he asked after the deacons had gone.

"I have no sand."

He presently brought her a biggin of fine white sand, which brought the shore of Surrey to my mind's eye. I followed her as she carried it to the well-room, where I saw, on the meal chest, two large pewter plates, two flagons of the same metal,

and a dozen or more cups, some of silver, and marked with the owner's name. They were soon cleaned. Then she made a fire in the oven, and mixed loaves into a peculiar shape, and launched them into the oven. She watched the bread carefully, and took it out before it had time to brown.

"This work belongs to the deacon's wives," she said; "but it has been done in this house for years."

"The bread is unlike our bread."

"Because it is unleavened."

Grand'ther carried it into the church, after she had cut it with a sharp knife so that at the touch it would fall apart into square bits. When the remains were brought back, I went to the closet, where they were deposited, and took a piece of the bread, eating it reflectively, to test its solemnizing powers. I felt none, and when aunt Mercy boiled the remnants with milk for a pudding, the sacred ideality of the ceremony I had seen at church was destroyed for me.

Was it a pity that my life was not conducted on Nature's plan, who shows us the beautiful, by concealing the interior? We do not see the roots of her roses, and she hides from us all skeletons.

November passed, with its Thanksgiving—the sole day of all the year which grand'ther celebrated, by buying a goose for dinner, which goose was stewed with rye dumplings, that slid over my plate like glass balls. Sally and Ruth betook themselves to their farm, and hybernated. December came, and with it a young woman named Caroline, to learn the tailor's trade. Lively and pretty, she was incapable of fusing into our atmosphere. She broke the silence of the morning by singing the "Star-spangled Banner," or the "Braes of Balquhither," and disturbed the monotony of the evenings by making molasses candy, which grand'ther ate, and which seemed to have a mollifying influence. She was afflicted with a chronic sore throat; her favorite remedy was red pepper tea, which she made just before bed time, boiling the pepper pods while we were at prayers, and as soon as grand'ther said "Amen," swooping the porringer from the fire, and bearing it to the buttery, where she sipped it scalding hot. I took the pepper tea, for the sake of the sensation of having my throat stung, till I strangled. Grand'ther kept his eye on Caroline; but his eye had no disturbing effect. She had no perception of his character; was fearless with him, and went contrary to all his ideas, and he liked her for it. She even reproved him for keeping such a long face. Her sewing, which was very bad, tried his patience

so, that if it had not been for her mother, who was a poor widow, he would have given up the task of teaching her the trade. She said she knew she couldn't learn it; what was the use of trying? She should go out West, and thought she might make a good home-missionary, as she did, for she married a poor young man of medium ability, who had forsaken the trade of a cooper, to study for the ministry, and, having too little talent to hope for the charge of a church in any flourishing village, was helped off to Ohio by the Society of Home Missions. She came to see me in Surrey ten years afterwards, a gaunt, hollow-eyed woman, of forbidding manners, and an implacable faith in no rewards or punishments this side of the grave.

I suffered so from the cold that December, that I informed mother of the fact by letter. She wrote back:

"My child have courage. One of these days you will feel a tender pity, when you think of your mother's girlhood. You are learning how she lived at your age. I trembled at the prosperity of your opening life, and believed it best for you to have a period of contrast. I thought you would, by and by, understand me better than I do myself; for you are not like me, Cassy, you are like your father. You shall never go back to Barmouth, unless you wish it. Dear Cassy, do you pray any? I send you some new petticoats, and a shawl. Does Mercy warm the bed for you? Your affectionate mother."

I dressed and undressed in aunt Mercy's room, which was under the roof, with benumbed fingers. My hair was like the coat of a cow in frosty weather; it was so frowzy, and so divided against itself that when I tried to comb it, it streamed out like the tail of a comet. Aunt Mercy discovered that I was afflicted with chilblains, and had a good cry over them, telling me, at the same moment, that my French slippers were the cause. We had but one fire in the house, except the fire in the shop, which was allowed to go down at sunset. Sometimes I found a remaining warmth in the goose, which had been left in the ashes, and borrowed it for my stiffened fingers. I did not get thoroughly warm all day, for the fire in the middle room, made of green wood, was continually in the process of being stifled with a greener stick, as the others kindled. The school room was warm; but I had a back seat by a window, where my feet were iced by a current, and my head exposed to a draught. In January I had so bad an ague, that I was confined at home a week, under a mild regimen of blisters and poultices.

I grew fast, in spite of all my discomforts. Aunt Mercy

took the tucks out of my skirts, and I burst out where there were no tucks. I had assumed a womanly shape. Stiff as my hands were, and purple as were my arms, I could see that they were plump and well-shaped. I had lost the meagreness of childhood, and I began to feel a new and delightful affluence. What an appetite I had, too!

"The creature will eat us out of house and home," said grand'ther one day, looking at me, for him good humoredly.

"Well, don't shoot me, as you shot the pigeons."

"Pah, have pigeons a soul?"

In February the weather softened, and a great revival broke out. It was the dullest time of the year in Barmouth. The ships were at sea still, and the farmers had only to fodder their cattle, so that everybody could attend the protracted meeting. It was the same as Sunday at our house for nine days. Miss Black, in consequence of the awakening, dismissed the school for two weeks, that the pupils might profit, in what she told us was The Scheme of Salvation.

Caroline was among the first converts. I observed her from the moment I was told she was under Conviction, till she experienced Religion. She sang no more of mornings, and the making of molasses candy was suspended in the evenings. I thought her less pleasing, and felt shy of holding ordinary conversation with her, for had she not been set apart for a mysterious work? I perceived that when she sewed between meetings, her work was worse done than ever; but grand-'ther made no mention of it. I went with aunt Mercy to meeting three times a day, and employed myself in scanning the countenances around me, curious to discover the first symptoms of Conviction.

One night, when grand'ther came in to prayers, he told aunt Mercy that Pardon Hitch was awfully distressed in mind, in view of his sins. She replied thas she thought him a good man.

"As good as any unregenerate man can be."

"I might as well be a thorough reprobate, then," I thought, "like Sal Thompson, who seems remarkably happy, as to try to behave as well as Pardon Hitch, who is a model in Barmouth."

When we went to church the next morning, I saw him in one of the back pews, leaning against the rail, as if he had no strength. His face was full of anguish. He sat there motionless all day. He was prayed for, but did not seem to hear the prayers. At night his wife led him home. By the end of the

third day, he interrupted an exhorting brother by rising, and uttering an inarticulate cry. We all looked. The tears were streaming down his pale face, which was lighted up by a smile of joy. He seemed like a man escaped from some great danger, torn, bruised, breathless, but alive. The minister left the pulpit to shake hands with him; the brethren crowded round and congratulated him, and the meeting broke up at once.

Neither grand'ther nor aunt Mercy had spoken to me concerning my interest in Religion; but on that very evening Mr. Boold, the minister, came in to tea and asked me, while he was taking off his overcoat, if I knew that Christ had died for me? I answered that I was not sure of it.

"Do you read your Bible, child?"

"Every day."

"And what does it teach you?"

"I do not know."

"Miss Mercy, I will thank you for another cup. 'Now is the day, and now is the hour; come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.'"

"But I do not want rest; I have no burden," I said.

"Cassandra," thundered grand'ther, "have you no respect for God nor man?"

"Have you read," went on the minister, "the memoir of Nathan Dickerman? A mere child, he realized his burden of sin in time, and died sanctified."

I thought it best to say no more. Aunt Mercy looked disturbed, and left the table as soon as she could with decency.

"Cassandra," she said when we were alone, "what will become of you?"

"What will, indeed? You have always said that I was possessed. Why did you not explain this fact to Mr. Boold?"

She kissed me,—her usual treatment when she was perplexed.

The revival culminated and declined. Sixty new members were admitted into the church, and things settled into the old state. School was resumed; I found that not one of my schoolmates had met with a change, but Miss Black did not touch on the topic. My year was nearly out; March had come and gone, and it was now April. One mild day in the latter part of the month, the girls went to the yard at recess. Charlotte Alden said pleasantly, that the weather was fair enough for out-of-doors play, and asked if I would try the tilt. I gave a cordial assent. We balanced the board so that each could seat herself, and began to tilt slowly. As she was heavy,

I was obliged to exert my strength to keep my place, and move her. She asked if I dared to go higher. "Oh yes, if you wish it." Happening to look round I caught her winking at the girls near us, and felt that she was brewing mischief, but I had no time to dwell on it. She bore the end she was on to the ground, with a sudden jerk, and I fell from the other, some eight feet, struck a stone, and fainted.

The next thing that I recollect was aunt Mercy's carrying me across the street in her arms. She had seen my fall from the window. Reaching the house she let me slide on the floor in a heap, and began to wring her hands, and stamp her feet.

"I am not hurt, aunt Mercy."

"You are nearly killed, you know you are. This is your last day at that miserable school. I am going for the Doctor, as soon as you say you won't faint again."

My education at Miss Black's was finished with a blow. I had been mentally knocked about the whole period; but I believe my mind was only stimulated into the reception of a few Latinized words.

When aunt Mercy represented to Miss Black that I was not to return to school, and that she feared I had not made the improvement that was expected, Miss Black asked with hauteur, what had been expected—what my friends *could* expect? Aunt Mercy was intimidated, and retired as soon as she had paid her the last quarter's bills.

A week after my tournament with Charlotte Alden I went back to Surrey. There was little preparation to make—few friends to bid farewell. Ruth and Sally had emerged from their farm, and were sewing again at grand'ther's. Sally bade me remember that riches took to themselves wings and flew away; she *hoped* they had not been a snare to my mother; but she wasn't what she was, it was a fact.

"No, she isn't," Ruth affirmed. "Do you remember, Sally, when she came out to the farm once, and rode the white colt bare-back round the big meadow, with her hair flying?"

"Hold your tongue, Ruth."

Ruth looked penitent as she gave me a paper of hollyhock seeds, and said the flowers were a beautiful blood red, and that I must plant them near the sink drain. Caroline had already gone home, so aunt Mercy had nothing cheery, but her plants and her snuff; for she had lately contracted the habit of snuff-taking, but very privately.

"Train her well, Locke; she is skittish," said grand'ther, as we got into the chaise to go home.

"Grand'ther, if I am ever rich enough to own a peaked-roof pig-sty, will you come and see me?"

"Away with you." And he went nimbly back to the house, chafing his little hands.

CHAPTER XI.

I was going home! When we rode over the brow of the hill within a mile of Surrey, and I saw the crescent-shaped village, and the tall chimneys of our house on its outer edge, instead of my heart leaping for joy, as I had expected, a sudden indifference filled it. I felt averse to the change from the narrow ways of Barmouth, which, for the moment, I regretted. When I entered the house, and saw mother in her old place, her surroundings unaltered, I suffered a disappointment, because I had not had the power of transferring, for her benefit, the atmosphere of my year's misery to Surrey.

The family gathered round me. I heard the wonted sound of the banging of doors. "The doors at grand'ther's," I mused, "had list nailed round their edges; but then he *had* the list, being a tailor."

"I vum," said Temperance, with her hand on her hip, and not offering to approach me, "your hair is as thick as a mop."

Hepsey, rubbing her fingers against her thumb, remarked that she hoped learning had not taken away my appetite. "I have made an Indian bannock for you, and we are going to have broiled sword-fish, besides. Is it best to cook more, Mrs. Morgeson, now that Cassandra has come?"

The boy, by name Charles, came to see the new arrival, but smitten with diffidence crept under the table, and examined me from his retreat.

"Don't you wish to see Arthur?" inquired mother; "he is getting his double teeth."

"Oh yes, and where's Veronica?"

"She's up garret writing geography, and told me nothing in the world must disturb her, till she had finished an account of the city of Palmiry."

"Call her when supper is ready," replied mother, who asked me to come into the bed-room where Arthur was sleeping. He was a handsome child, large and fair, and as I lifted

his white, lax fingers, a torrent of pitying love swept through me ; I kissed him.

"I am afraid I make an idol of him, Cassy."

"Are you unhappy because you love him so well, mother, and feel that you must make an expiation ?"

"Cassandra," she spoke with haste, "did you experience any shadow of a change during the revival at Barmouth ?"

"No more than the baby here did."

"I shall have faith, though, that it will be well with you, because you have had the blessing of so good a man as your grand'ther."

"But I never heard a word of grand'ther's prayers. Do you remember his voice ?"

A smile crept into her blue eye, as she said : "My hearing him, or not, would make no difference, since God could hear and answer."

"Grand'ther does not like me ; I never pleased him."

She looked astonished, then reflective. It occurred to her that she, also, had been no favorite of his. She changed the subject. We talked on what had happened in Surrey, and commenced a discussion on my wardrobe, when we were summoned to tea. Temperance brought Arthur to the table half asleep, but he roused when she drummed on his plate with a spoon. Hepsey was stationed by the bannock, knife in hand, to serve it. As we began our meal, Veronica came in from the kitchen, with a plate of toasted crackers. She set the plate down, and gravely shook hands with me, saying she had concluded to live entirely on toast, but supposed I would eat all sorts of food, as usual. She had grown tall ; her face was still long and narrow, but prettier. Her large, dark eyes had a slight cast, which gave her face an indescribable expression. Distant, indifferent, and speculative as the eyes were, a ray of fire shot into them occasionally, which made her gaze powerful and concentrated. I was within a month of sixteen, and Veronica was in her thirteenth year ; but she looked as old as I did. She carefully prepared her toast with milk and butter, and ate it in silence. The plenty around me, the ease and independence which each one felt, gave me a delightful sense of comfort. The dishes were odd, some of china, some of delf, and were continually moved out of their places, for we helped ourselves, although Temperance stayed in the room, ostensibly as a waiter She was too much engaged in conversation to fulfil her duties that way. I looked round the room ; nothing had been added to it, except red damask curtains, which were out of

keeping with the old chintz covers. It was a delightful room, however; the blue sea glimmered between the curtains, and turning my eyes towards it, my heart gave the leap which I had looked for. I grew blithe as I saw it winking under the rays of the afternoon sun, and clapping my hands, said I was glad to get home. We left Veronica at the table, and mother resumed her conversation with me in a corner of the room. Presently Temperance came in with Charles, bringing fresh plates. As soon as they began their supper, Veronica asked Temperance how the fish tasted.

"Is it salt?"

"Middling."

"How is the bannock?"

"Excellent. I will say it for Hepsey, that she hasn't her beat as a cook; been at it long enough," she added, in expiation of her praise.

"Temperance, is that pound cake, or sponge?"

"Pound."

"Charles can eat it," Verry said with a sigh.

"A mighty small piece he'll have—the glutton. But he has not been here long; they are all so when they first come."

She then gave him a large slice of the cake.

Veronica, contrary to her wont, huddled herself in a heap on the sofa. Arthur played round the chair of mother, who looked happy and forgetful. After Temperance had rearranged the table for father's supper we were quiet. I meditated how I could best amuse myself, where I should go, and what I should do, when Veronica, whom I had forgotten, interrupted my thoughts.

"Mother," she said, "eating toast does not make me better-tempered; I feel evil still. You know," turning to me, "that my temper is worse than ever; it is like a tiger's."

"Oh, Verry," said mother, "not quite so bad; you are too hard upon yourself."

"Mother, you said so to Hepsey, when I tore her turban from her head, it was *so* ugly. Can you forget you said such a thing?"

"Verry, you drive me wild. Must I say that I was wrong? Say so to my own child?"

Verry turned her face to the wall and said no more; but she had started a less pleasant train of thought. It was changed again by Temperance, coming with lights. Though the tall brass lamps glittered like gold, their circle of light was small; the corners of the room were obscure. Mr. Park entering, re-

treated into one, and mother was obliged to forego the pleasure of undressing Arthur; so she sent him off with Temperance and Charles, whose duty it was to rock the cradle as long as his babyship required.

Soon after father came, and Hepsey brought in his hot supper; while he was eating it, grandfather John Morgeson bustled in. As he shook hands with me, I saw that his hair had whitened, and that he was growing blind and clumsy; he held a tasseled cane between his knees, and thumped the floor whenever he asked a question. Mr. Park buzzed about the last Sunday's discourse, and mother listened with a vague, respectful attention. Her hand was pressed against her breast, as if she were repressing an inward voice which had claimed her attention. Leaning her head against her chair, she had quite pushed out her comb, and her hair dropped on her shoulder, and looked like a brown, coiled serpent. Veronica, who had been silently observing her, rose from the sofa, picked up the comb, and fastened her hair, without speaking. As she passed she gave me a dark look.

"Eh, Verry," said father, "are you there? Were you glad to see Cassy home again?"

"Should I be glad? What can *she* do?"

Grandfather pursed up his mouth, and turned towards mother, as if he would like to say: "You understand bringing up children, don't you?"

She comprehended him, and giving her head a slight toss, told Verry to go and play on the piano.

"I was going," she answered pettishly, and darting out a moment after we heard her.

Grandfather went away as if he had been called, and presently Mr. Park got up in a lingering way, said that Verry must learn to play for the Lord, and bade us "Good night." But he came back again, to ask me if I would join Dr. Snell's Bible Class. It would meet the next evening; the boys and girls of my own age went. I promised him to go, wondering whether I should meet an ancient beau, Joe Bacon. Mother retired; Verry still played.

"Her talent is wonderful," said father, taking the cigar from his mouth. "By the way, you must take lessons in Milford; I wish you would learn to sing." I acquiesced, but I had no wish to learn to play. I could never perform mechanically what I heard now from Verry. When she ceased, I woke from a dream, chaotic, but not tumultuous, beautiful, but inharmonious. Though the fire had gone out, the lamps winked

brightly, and father, moving his cigar to the other side of his mouth, changed his regards from one lamp to the other, and said he thought I was growing to be an attractive girl. He asked me if I would take pains to make myself an accomplished one also? I must, of course, be left to myself in many things; but he hoped that I would confide in him, if I did not ask his advice. A very strong relation of reserve generally existed between parent and child, instead of a confidential one, and the child was apt to discover that reserve on the part of the parent was not superiority, but cowardice, or indifference. "Let it not be so with us," was his conclusion. He threw away the stump of his cigar, and went to fasten the hall door. I took one of the brass lamps, proposing to go to bed. As I passed through the upper entry, Veronica opened her door. She was undressed, and had a little book in her hand; she shook it at me, saying, "there is the day of the month put down on which you came home, and now mind," shut the door. While I undressed I pondered over what father had said. I felt that he perceived something in me which I was not aware of. I concluded to think seriously over it, after I was settled in bed; but discovered the next morning that I had not thought at all.

CHAPTER XII.

The next evening I dressed my hair after the fashion of the Barmouth girls, with the small pride of wishing to make myself look different from the Surrey girls. I expected they would stare at me in the Bible Class. It would be my debut as a grown girl, and I must offer myself to their criticism. I went late, so that I might be observed by the assembled class. It met in the upper story of Temperance Hall—a new edifice. As I climbed the steep stairs, Joe Bacon's head came in view; he had stationed himself on a bench at the landing to watch for my arrival, of which he had been apprized by our satellite, Charles. Joe was the first boy who had ever offered his arm as my escort home from a party. After that event I had felt that there was something between us, which the world did not understand. I was flattered, therefore, at the first glimpse of him on this occasion. After Dr. Snell made his opening prayer, Joe thrust a Bible before me, open at the lesson of the evening, and then, rubbing his nose with embarrassment, fixed

his eyes with timid assurance on the opposite wall. Several of my Morgeson cousins were present; instead of greeting me they looked at each other, and sniffed. But I was the most disappointed in Joe Bacon. How young and shabby he looked! He wore a monkey jacket, probably a remnant of his sea-going father's wardrobe. He had done his best, however, for his hair was greased, and combed to a marble smoothness. I was vexed by its sleekness, not remembering at that moment the pains I had taken to dress my own hair, for a more ignoble end.

The girls gathered round me, after the class was dismissed; and when Dr. Snell came down from his desk, he said he was glad to see me, and that I must come to his rooms to look over the new books he had received. Dr. Snell was no exception to the rule, that a minister must not be a native among his own people. His long residence in Surrey had failed to make him appear like one. A bachelor, with a small private fortune, his style of living differed from the average of Congregational parsons. His library was the only lion in our neighborhood. His taste as a collector made him known abroad, and he had a reputation which was not dreamed of by his parishioners, who called him queer and simple, inasmuch as his ideas, outside of theology, differed from theirs. He loved old fashions; wore knee breeches, and silver buckles in his shoes; brewed methegelin in his closet, and drank it from silver-pegged flagons; and kept diet bread on a salver to offer his visitors. He lived on the north road, beyond our orchard, and was very much afraid of his landlady, Mrs. Crossman, who sat in terrible state in her parlor, which was her bed-room also, the year through, wearing a black satin cloak over her night-gown, and an awful structure of cap, which had a potent nod.

I was pleased with Dr. Snell's notice; his smile was courtly, and his bow Grandisonian.

Joe Bacon was waiting at the foot of the stairs. He obtruded his arm, and hoarsely muttered "See you home." I took it, and we marched along silently, till we were beyond the sound of voices. He began, rather inarticulately, to say how glad he was to see me, and that he hoped he was going to have better times now; but I could make no response to his wishes; the suspicion that he had a serious liking for me was disgusting. As he talked on I grew irritable, and replied shortly. When we reached our house, I slipped my hand from his arm, and ran up the steps, turning back with my hand on the door knob to say "Good night." The lamp in the hall shone through the fan-light upon his face; it looked intelligent

with pain. I skipped down the steps. "Please open the door, Joe" He brightened, but before he could comply with my request, Temperance flung it wide, for the purpose of making a survey of the clouds, and guessing at to-morrow's weather. His retreat was precipitate.

"Oh ho," said Temperance, "a feller came home with you. We shall have somebody sitting up a-Thursday nights, I reckon, before long."

"Nonsense with your Thursday nights."

"Everybody is just alike. We shall have rain, see if we don't; rain or no rain, I'll whitewash to-morrow."

Poór Joe! That night ended my first love affair. He died with the measles in less than a month.

Mother asked me how I liked the Bible Class, and who was there. I told her what Dr. Snell had said, but suppressed my interview with Joe.

"I wish," said Temperance, who was now spelling over a newspaper, "that Dr. Snell would come in before the plum cake is gone, that Hepsey made last. The old dear loves it; he is always hungry. I candidly believe Mis Crossman keeps him short."

I expected that Temperance would break out then about Joe; but she never mentioned him, except to tell me that she had heard of his death. She did not whitewash the next day, for Charles came down with the measles, and was tended by her with a fretful tenderness. Veronica was seized soon after, and then Arthur, and then I had them. Veronica was the worst patient. When her room was darkened she got out of bed, tore down the quilt that was fastened to the window, and broke three panes of glass before she could be captured and taken back. The quilt was not put up again, however. She cried with anger, unless her hands were continually washed with lavender water, and made little pellets of cotton which she stuffed in her ears and nose, so that she might not hear or smell.

I went to Dr. Snell's as soon as I was able. He was in his bed-chamber, writing a sermon on fine note paper, and had disarranged the wide ruffles of his shirt so that he looked like a mildly angry turkey. Thrusting his spectacles up into the roots of his hair, he rose, and led me into a large room adjoining his bed-room, which contained nothing but tall book-cases, threw open the doors of one, pushed up a little ladder before it, for me to mount to a row of volumes bound in calf, whose backs were labelled "British Classics." "There," he said,

"you will find 'The Spectator,'" and trotted back to his sermon, with his pen in his mouth. I examined the books, and selected Tom Jones and Goldsmith's Plays to take home From that time I grazed at pleasure in his oddly-assorted library, ranging from "The Gentleman's Magazine" to a file of the "Boston Recorder;" but never a volume of poetry anywhere. I became a devourer of books which I could not digest, and their influence located in my mind curious and inconsistent relations between facts and ideas.

My music lessons in Milford were my only task. I remained inapt, while Veronica played better and better; when I saw her fingers interpreting her feelings, touching the keys of the piano as if they were the chords of her thoughts, practice by note seemed a soulless, mechanical effort, which I would not make. My teacher told me that I lacked ear for music, and that by great perseverance I could only be a tolerable player; so, after the second quarter, I gave it up, and subscribed to the Milford Circulating Library instead, dipping deeply into its brown-papered literature. Mother begged me to leave reading, and do something useful; but she never suggested any occupation, and if she happened to take up my novels, she was lost in them. One day we were both reading the separate volumes of charming Miss Austen's "Mansfield Park," when a message arrived from aunt Mercy, with the news of grand-'ther Warren's dangerous illness. Mother dropped her book on the floor, but I turned down the leaf where I was reading. She went to Barmouth immediately, and the next day grand-'ther died. He gave all he had to aunt Mercy, except six silver spoons, which he directed the Barmouth silversmith to make for Caroline, who was now married to her missionary. Mother came home to prepare for the funeral, which was to be held in Barmouth church. Her bonnet must be all black, mine and Veronica's merely trimmed. Her orders were sent to Milford. When the bonnets, vails, and black gloves came home, Veronica declared she would not go As she had been allowed to stay away from grand'ther Warren living, why should she be forced to go to him when dead? She was so violent in her opposition that mother ordered Temperance to keep her in her room. Father tried to persuade her, but she grew white, and trembled so that he told her she should stay at home. While we were gone she sent her bonnet to the widow Smith's daughter, who appeared in the Poor Seats wearing it, on the very Sunday after the funeral, when we all went to church in

our black, and made the discovery, which discomposed mother exceedingly, and made me indignant.

All the church were present at grand'ther's funeral,—obsequies, as Mr. Boold called it, who exalted his character and behavior so greatly in his discourse, that his nearest friends would not have recognized him, although everybody knew that he was a good man. Mr. Boold expatiated on his tenderness, and delicate appreciation, and his study of the feelings and wants of others, till he was moved to tears himself by the picture he drew. I thought of the pigeons he had shot, and of the summary treatment he gave me—of his coldness and silence towards aunt Mercy, and my eyes remained dry; but mother and aunt Mercy wept bitterly. After it was over, and they had gone back to the empty house, they removed their heavy bonnets, kissed each other, said they knew that he was in heaven, and held a comforting conversation about the future; but my mind was chained to the edge of the yawning grave, into which I had seen his coffin lowered, and I wondered how long it would be before one yawned for them.

"Shut up the old shell, Mercy," said father. "Come, and live with us."

She was rejoiced at the prospect, for the life at our house was congenial, and she readily and gratefully consented. She came in a few days to Surrey, with a multitude of boxes, and her plants. Mother established her in the room next the stairs—a good place for her, Veronica said, for she could be easily locked out of our premises. The plants were placed on a new revolving stand, which stood on the landing-place beneath the stair window. Veronica was so delighted with them, that she made amicable overtures to aunt Mercy, and never quarrelled with her afterwards, except when she was ill. She intreated her to leave off her bombazine dresses; the touch of them interfered with her feelings for her, she said;—in fact, their contact made her crawl all over; and when she caught her taking snuff, or sorting flag root and cloves, getting them ready for chewing, she asked her if she was an animal, and only indulged her friends with the appearance of being a human creature.

Aunt Mercy took upon herself many of mother's small cares which were irksome; such as remembering where the patches and old linen were—the hammer and nails; watching the sweetmeat pots; keeping the run of the napkins and blankets; packing the winter clothing, and having an eye on mice and ants, moth and mould. Occasionally she read a novel; but

was faithful to all the week-day meetings, making the acquaintance thereby of mother's tea-drinking friends, who considered her an accomplished person, because she worked lace so beautifully, and had *such* a faculty for raising plants! Mother left the house in her charge, and made several journeys with father this year. This period was perhaps her happiest. The only annoyance, visible to me, that I can remember, was one between her and father on the subject of charity. He was for giving to all needy persons, while she only desired to bestow it on the deserving. She was angry with him for accepting the confidences and confessions of certain disreputable persons who sought him. She feared he lacked self-respect, and he knew she wanted tolerance. Veronica sided with mother, and I sided with father, which grieved her more than Veronica's adherence gratified her. The pleasant tradition that married people grow like each other, did not hold good with them. They renounced the wish of manufacturing each other's habits and opinions, in their early marriage. Whether mother ever desired the expression of that exaltation of feeling which only lasts in a man while he is in love, I cannot say. It was not for me to know her heart. It is not ordained that these beautiful secrets of feeling should be revealed, where they might prove to be the sweetest knowledge we could have.

Though the days flew by, days filled with the busy nothings of prosperity, I was not happy; they bore no meaning. I shifted the hours, as one shifts the kaleidescope, with an eye only to their movement. Neither the remembrance of yesterday, nor the hope of to-morrow stimulated me. The mere fact of breathing had ceased to be a happiness, since the day I entered Miss Black's school. But I was not yet thoughtful. As for my position, I was loved and I was hated, and it pleased me as much to be hated as to be loved. My acquaintances were always kind enough to let me know that I was generally thought proud, exacting, ill-natured, and apt to expect the best for myself. But one thing I know of myself then—that I concealed nothing; the desires and emotions which are usually kept as a private fund, I displayed and exhausted. My audacity shocked those who possessed this fund. My candor was called any thing but truthfulness; they named it sarcasm, cunning, coarseness, or tact, as they were constituted who came in contact with me. Insight into character, frankness, generosity, disinterestedness, were sometimes given me. Veronica alone was uncompromising; she put aside by instinct what baffled or attracted others, and setting my real value

upon me acted accordingly. I do not accuse her of injustice, but of a fierce harshness which kept us apart for long years. As for her, she was the most reticent girl I ever knew, and but for her explosive temper which betrayed her, she would have been a mystery. The difference in our physical constitutions would have separated us, if there had been no other cause. The weeks that she was confined to her room, preyed upon by some inscrutable disease, were weeks of darkness and solitude. Temperance and aunt Merce took as much care of her as she would allow; but she preferred being alone most of the time. Thus she acquired the fortitude of an Indian; pain could extort no groan from her. It reacted on her temper, though, for after an attack she was exasperating. Her invention was put to the rack to teaze, and offend. I kept out of her way; if by chance she caught sight of me, she forced me to hear the bitter truth of myself. Sometimes she examined me to learn if I had improved by the means which father so *generously* provided for me. "Is he not yet tired of his task?" she asked once. And, "Do you carry everything before you, with your wide eyebrows and sharp teeth? Temperance, where's the Buffon Dr. Snell sent me. I want to classify Cass."

"I'll warrant you'll find her a sheep," Temperance replied.

"Sheep are innocent," said Veronica. "You may go," nodding to me, over the book, and Temperance also made energetic signs to me to go, and not bother the poor girl.

Always regarding her from the point of view she presented to me, I disliked her; her peculiarities offended me, and they did mother also. We did not perceive the process, but Verry was educated by sickness; her mind fed and grew on pain, and at last mastered it. The darkness in her nature broke; by slow degrees she gained health, though never much strength. Upon each recovery a change was visible; a spiritual dawn had risen in her soul: moral activity blending with her ideality made her life beautiful, even in the humblest sense. Veronica! you were endowed with genius; but while its rays penetrated you, we did not see them. How could we profit by what you saw and heard, when we were blind and deaf? To us, the voices of the deep sang no epic of grief; the speech of the woods was not articulate; the sea gull's flashing flight, and the dark swallow's circling sweep were facts only. Sunrise and sunset were not a pean to day and night, but five o'clock A. M. or P. M. The seasons that came and went were changes from hot to cold; to you, they were the moods of nature, which

found response in those of your own life and soul; her storms and calms were pulses which bore a similitude to the emotions of your heart!

Veronica's habits of isolation clung to her; she would never leave home. The teaching she had was obtained in Surrey. But her knowledge was greater than mine. When I went to Rosville she was reading "Paradise Lost," and writing her opinions upon it in a large blank book. She was also devising a plan for raising trees and flowers in the garret, so that she might realize a picture of a tropical wilderness. Her tastes were so contradictory that time never hung heavy with her; though she had as little practical talent as any person I ever knew, she was a help both to sick and well. She remembered peoples' ill turns, and what was done for them; and for the well she remembered dates, and suggested agreeable occupations—gave them happy ideas. Besides being a calendar of domestic traditions, she was weather-wise, and prognosticated gales, meteors, high tides and rains.

Home, father said, was her sphere. All that she required, he thought he could do; but of me he was doubtful. Where did I belong? he asked.

I was still 'possessed,' aunt Merce said, and mother called me 'lawless.' "What upon earth are you coming to?" asked Temperance. "You are sowing your wild oats with a vengeance."

"Locke Morgeson's daughter can do anything," commented the villagers. In consequence of the unlimited power accorded me, I was unpopular. "Do you think she is handsome?" inquired my friends of each other. "In what respect *can* she be called a beauty?" "Though she reads, she has no great wit," said one. "She dresses oddly for effect," another avowed, "and her manners are ridiculous." But they borrowed my dresses for patterns, imitated my bonnets, and adopted my colors. When I learned to manage a sail boat, they had an aquatic mania. When I learned to ride a horse, the ancient and moth-eaten side saddles of the town were resuscitated, and old family nags were made back-sore with the wearing of them, and their youthful spirits revived by new beginners sliding about on their rounded sides. My whims were sneered at, and then followed. Of course I was driven from whim to whim, to keep them busy, and to preserve my originality, and at last I became eccentric for eccentricity's sake. Attention to my behavior, or planning it rather, prepared the way for my Nemesis,

self-analysis. But as yet my wild oats were green, and flourishing in the field of youth.

CHAPTER XIII.

I was preaching one day to mother and aunt Merce, a sermon after the manner of Mr. Boold, of Barmouth, taking the sofa for a desk, and for my text, "Like David's Harp of solemn sound," and had attracted Temperance and Charles into the room by my declamation, when my audience was unexpectedly increased by the entrance of father, with a strange gentleman. Aunt Merce laughed hysterically; I waved my hand to her, a la Boold, and descended from my position.

"Take a chair," said Temperance, who was never abashed, thumping one down before the stranger.

"What is all this?" inquired father.

"Only a Ranz des Vaches, father, to please aunt Merce."

The stranger's eyes were fastened upon me, and father introduced me first; "My daughter," and, "Mr. Charles Morgeson, of Rosville."

"Receive me as a relative," he said, and turned to shake hands with mother. "Your daughter's great-grandfather Locke, was my grandfather's brother; I think that makes a sufficient cousinship for a claim, Mrs. Morgeson."

"Why not have looked us up before?" I asked.

"Why," said Veronica, who had just come in, "there are six Charles Morgesons buried in our grave yard."

"I thought," he said, "that the name was extinct. I saw your father's in a State Committee List, and feeling curious regarding it, I came here."

He bowed distantly to Veronica, for no one introduced her, but she did not return his bow, though she looked at him fixedly. Temperance and Hepsey hurried up a fine supper immediately. A visitor was a creature to be fed. Feeding together removes embarrassment, and before supper was over we were all acquainted with Mr. Morgeson. There were three cheerful old ladies spending the week with us—the widow Desire Carver, and her two maiden sisters, Polly and Sarepta Chandler. They filled the part of chorus in the domestic drama, saying, "A ha," whenever there was a pause. Veronica affected these old ladies greatly, and when they were in the

house gave them her society. But for their being there at this time, I doubt whether she would have seen Mr. Morgeson more than once. That evening she played for us. Her wild, pathetic melodies made our visitor's grey eyes flash with pleasure, and light up his cold face with gleams of feeling; but she was not gratified by his interest. "I think it strange that you should like my music," she said, crossly.

"Do you?" he answered, amused at her tone, "perhaps it is; but why should I not as well as your friends here," indicating the old ladies.

"Ah, we like it very much," said the three, clicking their snuff boxes.

"You, too, play?" he asked me.

"Miss Cassy don't play," answered the three, looking at me over their spectacles. "Miss Verry's sun puts out her fire."

"Cassandra does other things better than playing," Veronica said to Mr. Morgeson.

"Why, Veronica," I said surprised, going towards her.

"Go off, go off," she replied, in an under tone, and struck up a loud march. He had heard her, and while she played looked at her earnestly. Then, seeming to forget the presence of the three, he turned and put out his hand to me, with an authority I did not resist. I laid my hand in his; it was not grasped, but upheld. Veronica stopped playing.

He staid three days at our house. After the first evening we found him taciturn. He played with Arthur, talked of his children to him, and promised him a pony if he would go to Rosville. With father he discussed business matters, and went out with him to the ship yards and offices. I scarcely remember that he spoke to me, except in a casual way, more than once. He asked me if I knew whether the sea had any influence upon me; I replied that I had not thought of it. "There are so many things you have not thought of," he answered, "that this is not strange."

Veronica observed him closely; he was aware of it, but was not embarrassed; he met her dark gaze with one keener than her own, and neither spoke with the other. The morning he went away, while the chaise was waiting, which was to go to Milford to meet the stage coach, and he was inviting us to visit him, a thought seemed to strike him. "By the way, Morgeson, why not give Miss Cassandra a finish at Rosville? I have not told you of our Academy, nor of the advantages which Rosville

affords in the way of society. What do you say, Mrs Morgeson, will you let her come to my house for a year ?"

"Locke decides for Cassy," she answered; "I never do now," looking at me reproachfully.

Cousin Charles's hawk eyes caught the look, and he heard me too, when I tapped her shoulder till she turned round and smiled. I whispered, "Mother, your eyes are as blue as the sea yonder." She glanced towards it, and saw it murmuring softly, and creeping along the shore, licking the rocks and sand as if recognizing a master. But I saw and felt its steady, resistless heaving, insidious and terrible.

"Well," said father, "we will talk of it on the way to Milford."

"I have a kinder of a-creeping, about your cousin Charles, as you call him," said Temperance, after she had closed the porch door. "He is too much shut up for me. How's Mis cousin Charles, I wonder ?"

"He is fond of flowers," remarked aunt Merce; "he examined all my plants."

"That's a balm for every wound with you, isn't it ?" Temperance said. "I 'spose I can clean the parlor, unless Mis Carver and Chandler are sitting in a row there ?"

Veronica, who had hovered between the parlor and the hall while cousin Charles was taking his leave, so that she might avoid the necessity of any direct notice of him, but had heard his proposition about Rosville, said, "Cassandra will go there."

"Do you feel it in your bones, Verry ?" Temperance asked.

"Cassandra does."

"Do I ? I believe I do."

"You are eighteen; you are too old to go to school."

"But I am not too old to have an agreeable time; besides, I am not eighteen, and shall not be till four days from now."

"You think too much of having a good time," said mother. "I foresee the day when the pitcher will come back from the well, broken. You are idle and frivolous; eternally chasing after amusement."

"God knows I don't find it."

"I know you are not happy."

"Tell me," I said, striking the table with my hand, making Veronica wink, "tell me how I shall feel, and act."

"I have no influence with you, nor with Veronica."

"Because," said Verry, "we are all so different; but I like you, mother, and all that you do."

"Different," she exclaimed, "children talk to parents about a difference between them!"

"I never thought about it before," I said, "but *where* is the family likeness?"

Aunt Merce laughed, and Veronica said, "Philosophy."

"There's the Morgesons," I said, "I hate 'em all."

"All?" she echoed; "you are like this new one."

"And grand'ther Warren"—I continued.

"Your talk," interrupted aunt Merce, jumping up and walking about, "is enough to make him rise out of his grave."

"I think," said Veronica, "that grand'ther Warren nearly crushed you and mother, when you were girls of our age. Did you ever know that you had any wants then? Did you dare to dream anything different from what he laid down for you?"

Aunt Merce and mother exchanged glances.

"Say, mother, what shall I do?" I asked again.

"Do?" she answered in a mechanical voice; "read the Bible."

"I have; but am I, myself, there?"

"Veronica's life is not misspent," she continued, without heeding my remark, and seeming to forget that Verry was still there. "Why should she find work for her hands, when neither you nor I do?"

Veronica slipped out of the room; I went to mother and sat on the floor beside her. I loved her in an unsatisfactory way. What could we be to each other? We kissed tenderly; but she was saddened by something regarding me, which she could not explain, because she refused to explain me naturally. I thought she wished me to believe that she could have no infirmity in common with me—no temptations, no errors—believing that she must repress all the doubts and longings of her heart, for example's sake. Yet my curiosity was always excited, and always baffled, because she impressed me deeply; I never ceased to feel emotion towards her, though she gave me no reason for it.

There was a weight upon me all that day, a dreary sense of not being what she wished.

When father came home he asked me if I would like to go to Rosville. I answered, "Yes." Mother must go with me then; he could not leave home. The sooner I went the better. He also thought Veronica should go. She was called, and consulted, and provided Temperance would accompany us to take care of her, she consented to go. It was all arranged that evening. Temperance said we must wait a week at least;

for her corns must be cured, and the plum-colored silk, which had been shut up in a band-box for three years, must be made.

We started on our journey one bright morning in June. We were to go to Boston in a stage coach, a hundred miles and more from Surrey, and thence to Rosville, forty miles further, by railroad. We stopped a night on the way to Boston at a country inn, which stood before an egg-shaped pond. Temperance re-made our beds, declaiming the while against the unwholesome situation of the house ; the idea of anybody's living in the vicinity of fresh water astonished her ; to impose upon travelers' health that way was too much. She went to the kitchen to learn whether the landlady cooked, or hired a cook. She sat up all night with our luggage in sight, to keep off what she called ' prowlers'—she did not like to say robbers, for fear of exciting our imaginations—and frightened us by falling out of her chair towards morning. Veronica then insisted upon her going to bed, but she refused, till Veronica threatened to sit up herself, when she carried her own carpet bag to bed with her.

We arrived in Boston the next day and went to The Bromfield House in Bromfield street, whither father had directed us. We were ushered to the parlor by a waiter, who seemed struck by Temperance, and who was treated by her with respect. " Mr. Shepherd himself, I guess," she whispered.

Three cadaverous children were there eating bread and butter from a black tray on the centre table.

" Good Lord !" exclaimed Temperance, " what bread those children are eating ; it is made of sawdust."

" It's good, you old cat," screamed the little girl.

Veronica sat down by her, and offered her some sugar plums, which the child snatched from her hand.

" We are missionaries," said the oldest boy, " and we are going to Bombay next week in the ' Cabot.' I'll make the natives gee, I tell ye."

" Mercy on us !" exclaimed Temperance "did you ever ?"

Presently a sickly, gentle-looking man entered, in a suit of black camlet, and carrying an umbrella ; he took a seat by the children, and ran his fingers through his hair, which already stood upright.

" That girl gave Sis some sugar-plums," remarked the boy.

" I hope you thanked her, Clarissa," said the father.

" No ; she didn't give me enough," the child answered.

" They have no mother," the poor man said apologetically

to Veronica, looking up at her, and as he caught her eye, blushing deeply. She bowed, and moved away. Mother rang the bell, and when the waiter came gave him a note for Mr. Shepherd, which father had written, bespeaking his attention. Mr. Shepherd soon appeared, and conveyed us to two pleasant rooms with an unmitigated view of the wall of the next house from the windows, which had been made large on its account.

"This," remarked Temperance, "is worse than the pond."

Mr. Shepherd complimented mother on her fine daughters; hoped Mr. Morgeson would run for Congress soon; told her she should have the best the house afforded, and retired with a bow.

I wanted to shop, and mother gave me money. I found Washington street, and bought six wide, embroidered belts, a gilt buckle, a variety of ribbons, and a dozen yards of lace. I repented the whole before I got back; for I saw other articles I wanted more. I found mother alone; Temperance had gone out with Veronica. she said, and she had given Veronica the same amount of money, curious to know how she would spend it, as she never had been shopping. It was nearly dark when they returned.

"I like Boston," said Verry.

"But what have you bought?"

She displayed a beautiful gold chain, and a little cross for the throat; a bundle of picture books for the missionary children; a sewing silk shawl for Hepsey, and some toys for Arthur.

"To-morrow, *I* shall go shopping," said mother. "What did you buy, Temperance?"

"A mean shawl. In my opinion, Boston is a den of thieves."

She untied a box, from which she took a sky-blue silk shawl, with brown flowers woven in it.

"I gave eighteen dollars for it, if I gave a cent, Mis Morgeson; I know I am cheated. It's sleazy, isn't it?"

The bell for tea rang, and Mr. Shepherd came up to escort us to the table. Temperance delayed us, to tie on a silk apron, to protect the plum-colored silk, for, as she observed to Mr. Shepherd, she was afraid it would show grease badly. I could not help exchanging smiles with Mr. Shepherd, which made Veronica frown. The whole table stared as we seated ourselves, for we derived an importance from the fact that we were under the personal charge of the landlord.

"How they gawk at you," whispered Temperance. I felt my color rise.

"The gentlemen do not guess that we are sisters," said Veronica quietly.

"How do I look?" I asked.

"You know how you look, and that I do not agree with your opinion. You look cruel."

"I am hungry."

Her eyes sparkled with disdain.

"What do you mean to do for a year?" I continued.

"Forget you, for one thing."

"I hope you won't be ill again."

"I shall be," she answered with a shudder; "I need all the illnesses that come."

"As for me," I said, biting my bread and butter, "I feel well to my fingers' ends; they tingle with strength. I am elated with health."

I had not spoken the last word, before I became conscious of a streak of pain, which cut me like a knife, and vanished; my surprise at it was so evident that she asked me what ailed me.

"Nothing."

"I never had the feeling you speak of in my finger ends," she said sadly, looking at her slender hand.

"Poor girl!"

"What has come over you, Cass? An attack of compassion? Or do you wish to leave an amiable impression with me?"

After supper Mr. Shepherd asked mother if she would go to the theatre. The celebrated tragedian, Forrest, was playing; would the young ladies like to see Hamlet? We all went, and my attention was divided between Hamlet and two young men who lounged in the box door, till Mr. Shepherd looked them away. Veronica laughed at Hamlet, and Temperance said it was stuff and nonsense. Veronica laughed at Ophelia, also, who was a superb black-haired woman, toying with an elegant Spanish fan, which Hamlet in his energy broke. "It is not Shakespeare," she said.

"Has she read Shakespeare?" I asked mother.

"I am sure I do not know."

That night, after mother and Veronica were asleep, I persuaded Temperance to get up, and bore my ears with a coarse needle, which I had bought for the purpose. It hurt me so, when she pierced one, that I could not summon resolution to have the other operated on; so I went to bed with a bit of sewing silk in the hole she had made. But in the morning, I

roused her, and told her I thought I could bear to have the other ear bored. When mother got up I showed her my ears red and sore, and told her that I must have a certain pair of white cornelian ear-rings, set in chased gold, and three inches long, which I had seen in a shop window. She scolded Temperance, and then gave me the money for them.

The next day mother and I started for Rosville. Veronica decided to remain in Boston with Temperance, till mother returned. She said that if she went, she might find Mrs. Morgeson as disagreeable as Mr. Morgeson was; that she liked The Bromfield; besides, she wanted to see the missionary children off for Bombay, and intended to go down to the ship on the day they were to sail. She was also going to ask Mr. Shepherd to look up a celebrated author for her. She must see one if possible.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was sunset when we arrived in Rosville, and found Mr. Morgeson waiting for us with his carriage at the station. From its open sides I looked out on a tranquil, agreeable landscape; there was nothing saline in the atmosphere. The western breeze, which blew in our faces, had an earthy scent, with fluctuating streams of odors from trees and flowers. As we passed through the town, cousin Charles pointed to the Academy, which stood at the head of a green. Pretty houses stood round it, and streets branched from it in all directions. Flower gardens, shrubbery and trees were scattered everywhere. Rosville was larger and handsomer than Surrey.

"That is my house, on the right," he said.

We looked down the shady street through which we were going, and saw a modern cottage, with a piazza and peaked roof, and on the side toward us a large yard, and stables.

We drove into the yard, and a woman came out on the piazza to receive us. It was Mrs. Morgeson, or "My wife, cousin Alice," as Mr. Morgeson introduced her. Giving us a cordial welcome, she led us into a parlor where tea was waiting. A servant came in for our bonnets and baskets. Cousin Alice begged us to take tea at once. We were hardly seated when we heard the cry of a young child; she left the table hastily, and came back in a moment with an apology, which she made to cousin Charles, rather than to us. I had never seen

a table so well arranged, so fastidiously neat; it glittered with glass and French china. Cousin Charles sent away a glass and a plate, frowning at the girl who waited; there must have been a speck or a flaw in them. The viands were as pretty as the dishes. The lamb chops were fragile; the bread was delicious, but cut in transparent slices, and the butter pat was nearly stamped through with its boquet of flowers. This was all the feast except sponge cake, which felt like muslin in the fingers; I could have squeezed the whole of it into my mouth. Still hungry, I observed that cousin Charles and Alice had finished; and though she shook her spoon in the cup, feigning to continue, and he snipped crumbs in his plate, I felt constrained to end my repast. He rose, and pushing back folding doors, we entered a large room, leaving Alice at the table. Windows extending to the floor opened on the piazza, but notwithstanding the stream of light over the carpet, I thought it sombre, and out of keeping with the cottage exterior. The walls were covered with dark red velvet paper. The furniture was dark; the mantel and table tops were black marble, and the vases and candelabra were bronze. He directed mother's attention to the portraits of his children, and explained them; I went to a table between the windows to examine the green and white sprays of some delicate flower I had never before seen. Its fragrance was intoxicating. I lifted the heavy vase which contained it; it was taken from me gently by Charles, and replaced.

"It will hardly bear touching," he said. "By to-morrow these little white bells will be dead and yellow."

I looked up at him. "What a contrast!" I said.

"Where?"

"Here, in this room, and in you."

"And between you and me?"

His face was serene, dark and delicate, but to look at it made me shiver. Mother came toward us, pleading fatigue as an excuse for retiring, and cousin Charles called cousin Alice, who went with us to our room. In the morning, she said, we should see her three children. She never left them, she was so afraid of their being ill. She also told mother that she would do all in her power to make my stay in Rosville pleasant and profitable. She was a mother, and could appreciate her anxiety and sadness in leaving me. Mother thanked her warmly, and was sure that I should be happy; but I had an inward misgiving that I should not have enough to eat.

"I hear Edward," she said. "Good-night."

Presently a girl, the same who had taken our bonnets, came in with a pitcher of warm water, and a plate of soda biscuit. She directed us where to find the apparel she had nicely smoothed and folded; took off the handsome counterpane, and the pillows trimmed with lace, putting others of a plainer make in their places; shook down the window curtains; asked us if we would have anything more, and quietly disappeared. I offered mother the warm water, and appropriated the biscuits. There were six. I ate every one, undressing meanwhile, and surveying the apartment.

"Cassy, Mrs Morgeson is an excellent housekeeper."

"Yes," I said huskily, for the dry biscuit choked me.

"What would Temperance and Hepsey say to this?"

"I think they would grumble, and admire. Look at this," showing her the tassels of the inner window curtains done up in little bags. "And the glass is pinned up with nice yellow paper; and here is a damask napkin fastened to the wall behind the washstand. And everything stands on a mat. I wonder if this is to be my room?"

"It is probably the chamber for visitors. Why, these are beautiful pillow cases, too," she exclaimed, as she put her head on the pillow. "Come to bed; don't read."

I had taken up a red morocco-bound book, which was lying alone on the bureau. It was Byron. I turned over the leaves, till I came to Don Juan, and read it through, and began Childe Harold, but the candle expired. I struck out my hands through the palpable darkness, to find the bed without disturbing mother, whose soul was calmly threading the labyrinth of sleep. I finished Childe Harold early in the morning though, and went down to breakfast, longing to be a wreck!

The three children were in the breakfast room, which was not the one we had taken tea in, but a small apartment, with a door opening into the garden. They were beautifully dressed, and their mother was tending and watching them. The oldest was eight years, the youngest three months. Cousin Alice gave us descriptions of their tastes and habits, dwelling with emphasis on those of the baby. I drew from her conversation the opinion that she had a tendency to the rearing of children. I was glad when cousin Charles came in, looking at his watch. "Send off the babies, Alice, and ring the bell for breakfast."

She sent out the two youngest, and put little Edward in his chair, and breakfast began.

"Mrs. Morgeson," said Charles, "the horses will be ready

to take you round Rosville. We will call on Dr. Price, for you to see the kind of master Cassandra will have. I have already spoken to him about receiving a new pupil."

"Oh, I am home-sick, at the idea of school and a master," I said.

Mother tried, in vain, to look hard-hearted, and to persuade me that it was good for me; she lost her appetite with the thought of losing me, which the mention of Dr. Price brought home. The breakfast was as well adapted to a delicate taste as the preceding supper. The ham was most savory, but cut in such thin slices that it curled; and the biscuits were as white and feathery as snow-flakes. I think also that the boiled eggs were smaller than any I had seen. Cousin Alice gave unremitting attention to Edward, who ate as little as the rest.

"Mother," I said afterwards, "I am afraid I am an animal. Did you notice how little the Morgesons ate?"

"I noticed how elegant their table appointments were, and I shall buy new china in Boston to-morrow. I wish Hepsey would not load our table as she does."

"Hepsey is a good woman, mother; do give my love to her. Now that I think of it, she was always making up some nice dish; tell her I remember it, will you?"

When cousin Charles put us into the carriage, and hoisted little Edward on the front seat, mother noticed that two men held the horses, and that they were not the same he had driven the night before. She said she was afraid to go, they looked ungovernable; but he reassured her, and one of the men averring that Mr. Morgeson could drive anything, she repressed her fears, and we drove out of the yard behind a pair of horses that stood on their hind legs, as often as that position was compatible with the necessity they were under of getting on, for they evidently understood that they were guided by a firm hand. Edward was delighted with their behavior, and for the first time I saw his father smile on him.

"These are fine brutes," he said, not taking his eyes from them; "but they are not equal to my mare, Nell. Alice is afraid of her; but I hope that you, Cassandra, will ride with me sometimes when I drive her."

"Oh," exclaimed mother, grasping my arm.

"You would, would you?" he said, taking out the whip, as the horses recoiled from a man who lay by the road-side, leaping so high that the harness seemed rattling from their backs. He struck them, and said, "Go on now, go on, devils." There

was no further trouble. He encouraged mother not to be afraid, and looked keenly at me. I looked back at him.

"How much worse is the mare?"

"You shall see."

After driving round the town we stopped at the Academy. Morning prayers were over, and the scholars, some sixty boys and girls, were coming down stairs from the hall, to go into the rooms, each side of a great door. Dr. Price was behind them. He stopped when he saw us, and an introduction took place. He inquired for Dr. Snell, as an old college friend. Locke Morgeson sounded familiarly, he said; a member of his mother's family named Somers, had married a gentleman of that name. He remembered it from an old ivory miniature, which his mother had shown him, telling him it was the likeness of her cousin Rachel's husband. We only knew that grandfather had married a Rachel Somers. Cousin Charles was surprised, and a little vexed, that the Doctor had never told him, when he must have known that he had been anxiously looking up the Morgeson pedigree; but the doctor declared he had not thought of it before, and that only the name of Locke had recalled it to his mind. He then proposed our going to Miss Prior, the lady who had charge of the girl's department; and we followed him to her school-room.

I was at once interested and impressed by the appearance of my teacher that was to be. She was a dignified, kind-looking woman. She asked me a few questions in such a pleasant, direct manner, that I frankly told her I was eighteen years old, very ignorant, and averse to learning; but I did not speak loud enough for anybody besides herself to hear.

"Now," said mother, when we came away, "think how much greater your advantages are, than mine have ever been. How miserable was my youth! It is too late for me to make any attempt at cultivation. I have no wish that way. Yet I feel sometimes as if I were leaving the confines of my old life, to go, I know not whither; to do, I know not what."

But her countenance fell when she heard that Dr. Price had been a Unitarian minister, and that there was no Congregational church in Rosville.

She went to Boston that Friday afternoon, anxious to get safely home with Veronica. We parted with many a kiss, and shake of the hand, and last words. I cried when I went up to my room, for I found a present there—a beautiful work-box, and in it was a small Bible with my name and hers written on the fly leaf, in large, print-like, but tremulous letters. I

composed my feelings by putting it away carefully, and unpacking my trunk.

CHAPTER XV.

Rosville was a county town. The courts were held there, and its society was adorned with several lawyers of note, who had law students, which fact was to the lawyers' daughters the most agreeable feature of their fathers' profession. It had a weekly market day, and an annual Cattle Show. I saw a turn out of whips and wagons about the hitching posts round the green of a Tuesday the year through, and going to and from school met men with a bovine smell. Caucuses were prevalent, and occasionally a State Convention was held, when Rosville paid honor to some political hero of the day, with banners and brass bands. It was a favorite spot for the rustication of naughty boys from Harvard, or Yale. Dr. Price had one or two at present, who boarded in his house, so as to be immediately under his purblind eyes, and who took Greek and Latin at the Academy.

Social feuds raged in the Academy Coteries between the collegians and the natives, on account of the superior success of the former in flirtation. The latter were not consoled by their experience that no flirtation lasted beyond the period of rustication. Dr. Price usually had several young men fitting for college also, which added still more piquancy to the provincial society. In the summer riding parties were fashionable, and in the winter county balls, and cotillion parties; a Professor came down from Boston at this season to set up a dancing school, which was always well attended.

The secular concerns of life engaged the greatest share of the interests of its inhabitants; and although there existed social and professional dissensions, there was little sectarian spirit among them, and no religious zeal. The rich and fashionable were Unitarians. The society owned a tumble-down church; a mild preacher stood in its pulpit, and prayed and preached, side-ways, and slouchy. This degree of religious vitality accorded with the habits of its generations. Surrey and Barmouth would have howled over the Total Depravity of Rosville. There was no probationary air about it. Human Nature was the infallible theme there. At first, I missed the

vibration of the moral sword which poised in our atmosphere. When I felt an emotion without seeing the shadow of its edge turning towards me, I discovered my conscience, which hitherto had only been described to me.

There were churches in the town besides the Unitarian. The Universalists had a bran new one, and there was still another, frequented by the sedimentary part of the population—Methodists.

I toned down perfectly within three months. Soon after my arrival at his house, I became afraid of cousin Charles. Not that he ever said anything to justify fear of him—he was more silent at home than elsewhere; but he was imperious, fastidious, and sarcastic with me, by a look, a gesture, an inflection of his voice. My perception of any defect in myself was instantaneous with his discovery of it. I fell into the habit of guessing each day whether I was to offend or please him, and then into that of intending to please. An intangible, silent, magnetic feeling existed between us, changing and developing according to its own mysterious law, remaining intact in spite of the contests between us, of resistance and defiance. But my feeling died or slumbered, when I was beyond the limits of his personal influence. When in his presence, I was so pervaded by it, that whether I went contrary to the dictates of his will, or not, I moved as if under a pivot; when away, my natural elasticity prevailed, and I held the same relation to others, that I should have held, if I had not known him. This continued till the secret was divined, and then his influence was better remembered.

I discovered that there was no love between him and Alice. I never heard from either an expression denoting that each felt an interest in the other's individual life; neither was there any of that conjugal free-masonry which bores one so to witness. But Alice was not unhappy. Her ideas of love ended with marriage; what came afterwards—children, housekeeping, and the claims of society—sufficed her needs. If she had any surplus of feeling, it was expended upon her children, who had much from her already, for she was devoted and indulgent to them. In their management she allowed no interference, on this point only thwarting her husband. In one respect she and Charles harmonized; both were worldly, and in all the material of living there was sympathy. Their relation was no unhappiness to him; he thought, I dare say, if he thought at all, that it was a natural one. The men of his ac-

quaintance called him a lucky man, for Alice was handsome—not more than thirty—kind hearted, intelligent, and popular.

Whether cousin Alice would have found it difficult to fulfil the promise she made mother regarding me, if I had been a plain, unnoticeable girl, I cannot say; or whether her anxiety that I should make an agreeable impression, would have continued beyond a few days. She looked after my dress and my acquaintances. When she found that I was sought by the young people of her set and the Academy, she was gratified, and opened her house for them, giving little parties and large ones, which were pleasant to everybody except cousin Charles, who detested company—"it made him lie so." But he was very well satisfied that people should like to visit, and praise, his house and its belongings, if Alice would take the trouble of it upon herself. I made calls with her Wednesday afternoons, and went to church with her Sunday mornings. At home I saw little of her. She was almost exclusively occupied with the children—their ailments or their pleasures, and staid in her own room, or the nursery.

When in the house I never occupied one spot long, but wandered in the garden, which had a row of elms, or haunted the kitchen and stables, to watch black Phœbe, the cook, or the men as they cleaned the horses or carriages. My own room was in a wing of the cottage, with a window overlooking the entrance into the yard and the carriage drive; this was its sole view, except the wall of a house on the other side of a high fence. I heard Charles when he drove home at night, or away in the morning; knew when Nell was in a bad humor by the tone of his voice, which I heard whether my window was open or shut. It was a pretty room, with a set of maple furniture, and amber and white wall paper, and amber and white chintz curtains and coverings. It suited the color of my hair, Alice declared, and was becoming to my complexion.

"Yes," said Charles, looking at my hair with an expression that made me put my hand up to my head as if to hide it; I knew that my hair was carelessly dressed.

I made a study that day of the girls' heads at school, and from that time improved in my style of wearing it, and I brushed it with zeal every day afterwards. Alice had my room kept so neatly for me, that it soon came to be a reproach; and I was finally taught by her example how to adjust chairs, books, and mats in straight lines, and to fold articles without making odd corners and wrinkles. At last I improved so much, that I could find what I was seeking in a drawer, without har-

rowing it with my fingers, and began to see beauty in order. Alice had a talent for housekeeping and her talent was fostered by the exacting, systematic taste of her husband. He examined many matters which are usually left to women: he applied his business talent to the art of living, and succeeded in it, as he did in everything else.

Alice told me that Charles had been poor; that his father was never on good terms with him. She fancied they were too much alike; so he had turned him off to shift for himself, when quite young. When she met him, he was the agent of a manufacturing company, in the town where her parents lived, and even then, in his style of living he surpassed the young men of her acquaintance. The year before they were married his father died, and as Charles was his only child, he left his farm to him, and ten thousand dollars—all he had. The executors of the will were obliged to advertise for him, not having any clue to his place of residence. He sold the farm as soon as it was put in his hands, took the ten thousand dollars, and came back to be married. A year after, he came to Rosville, and built a cotton factory, three miles from town, and the cottage, and then brought her and Edward, who was a few months old, to live in it. He had since enlarged the works, employed more operatives, and was making a great deal of money. Morgeson's Mills, she believed, were known all over the country. Charles was his own agent, as well as sole owner. There were no mills besides his in the neighborhood; to that fact she ascribed the reason of his having no difficulties in Rosville, and no enmities; for she knew he had no wish to make friends. The Rosville people having no business in common with him, had no right to meddle, and could find but small excuse for comment. They spent, she said, five or six thousand a year; most of it went in horses, she was convinced, and she believed his flowers cost him a great deal too. "You must know, Cassandra, that his heart is with his horses, and his flowers. He is more interested in them than he is in his children."

She looked vexed when she said this; but I took hold of the edge of her finely-embroidered cape, and asked her how much it cost. She laughed, and said, "Fifty dollars; but you see how many lapels it has. I have still a handsomer one that was seventy-five."

"Are they a part of the six thousand a year, Alice?"

"Of course; but Charles wishes me to dress, and never stints me in money; and after all, I like for him to spend his money in his own way. It vexes me sometimes, he buys such

wild brutes, and endangers his life with them. He rides miles and miles every year; and it relieves the tedium of his journeys to have horses he must watch, I suppose."

Nobody in Rosville lived at so fast a rate as the Morgesons. The oldest families there were not the richest—the Ryders, in particular. Judge Ryder had four unmarried daughters; they were the only girls in our set who never invited us to visit them. They could not help saying with a fork of the neck, "Who are the Morgesons?" But all the others welcomed cousin Alice, and were friendly with me. She was too pretty and kind-hearted not to be liked, if she was rich; and cousin Charles was respected, because he made no acquaintance beyond bows, and "How-de-dos." It was rather a stirring thing to have such a citizen, especially when he met with an accident, and he broke many carriages in the course of time; and now and then there was a row at the mills, which made talk. His being considered a hard man, did not detract from the interest he inspired.

My advent in Rosville might be considered a fortunate one; appearances indicated it; I am sure I thought so, and was very well satisfied with my position. I conformed to the ways of the family with ease, even in the matter of small breakfasts and light suppers. I found that I was more elastic than before, and more susceptible to sudden impressions. I was conscious of the ebb and flow of blood through my heart, and felt it when it eddied up into my face, and touched my brain with its flame-colored wave. I loved life again. The stuff of which each day was woven was covered with an arabesque which suited my fancy. I missed nothing that the present unrolled for me, but I looked neither to the past nor to the future. In truth there was little that was elevated in me. Could I have perceived it if there had been? Whichever way the circumstances of my life vacillated, I was not reached to the quick; whether spiritual or material influences made sinuous the current of being, it still flowed towards an undiscovered ocean.

Half the girls at the Academy, like myself, came from distant towns. Some had been there three years. They were all younger than myself. There never had been a boarding-house attached to the school, and it was not considered a derogatory thing, for the best families to receive these girls as boarders. We were therefore on the same footing, in a social sense. I was also on good terms with Miss Prior. She was a cold, indifferent woman, but faithful as a teacher, and gifted with an insight into the capacity of a pupil. She gave me a course of

History first, and after that Physical Philosophy ; but she never recommended any Moral Science whatever. When I had been with her a few months, she proposed that I should study the common branches ; my standing in the school was such then, that I went down into the primary classes without shame, and I must say that I was the dullest scholar in them. We also had a drawing master, and a music-teacher. The latter was an amiable woman, with theatrical manners. She was a Mrs. Lane ; but no Mr. Lane had ever been seen in Rosville. We girls supposed he had deserted her, which was the fact, she told me afterwards. She cried whenever she sang a sentimental song, but never gave up to her tears, singing on with blinded eyes, and quavering voice. She always wore silk dresses which had been handsome, with much frayed trimming about them, the hooks and eyes loosened, and the seams strained. I liked her, and although I did not take lessons, saw her every day when she came up to the Academy. She asked me once, if I had any voice. I answered her by singing one of our Surrey hymns, "*Once on the raging seas he rode.*" She grew pale, and said, "Don't for heaven's sake sing that! I can see my old mother, as she looked when she sang that hymn of a stormy night, when father was out to sea. Both are dead now, and where am I ?"

She turned round on the music stool, and banged out the accompaniment of "*O pilot 'tis a fearful night,*" and sang it with great energy. After her feelings were composed, she begged me to allow her to teach me to sing. "You can at least learn the simple chords of song accompaniments, and I think you have a voice that can be made effective."

I promised to try, and as I had taken lessons before, in three months I could play and sing, "*Should those fond hopes e'er forsake thee,*" tolerably well. But Mrs. Lane persisted in affirming that I had a dramatic talent, and as she supposed that I never should be an actress, I must bring it out in singing ; so I persevered, and, thanks to her, improved so much, that people said, when I was mentioned, "She sings."

The Moral Sciences went to Dr. Price, and he had a class of girls in Latin ; but my only opportunity of going before him was at morning prayers, and Wednesday mornings, when we assembled in the hall to hear orations in Latin, or translations, and 'pieces' spoken by the boys ; and at the quarterly reviews, when he marched us backwards and forwards through the books we had conned, like the sharp old gentleman he was, notwithstanding his purblind eyes.

CHAPTER XVI.

I HEARD from home regularly; father, however, was my only correspondent. He stipulated that I should write him every other Saturday, if not more than a line; but I did more than that at first, writing up the events of the fortnight, interspersing my opinions of the actors engaged therein, and dwindling by degrees down to the mere acknowledgement of his letter. He read without comment, but now and then asked me questions which puzzled me to answer.

"Do you like Mr. Morgeson?" he asked once.

"He is very attentive," I wrote back. "But, so is Cousin Alice,—she is fond of me."

"You do not like Morgeson?" again.

"Are there no agreeable young men," he asked another time, "with Doctor Price?"

"Only boys," I wrote—"cubs of my age."

Among the first letters I received, was one with the news of the death of my grandfather, John Morgeson. He had left ten thousand dollars for Arthur, the sum to be withdrawn from the house of Locke Morgeson and Co., and invested elsewhere, for the interest to accumulate, and be added to the principal, till he should be of age. The rest of his property he gave to the Foreign Missionary Society. "Now," wrote father, "it will come your turn next, to stand in the gap, when your mother and I fall back from the forlorn hope,—life." This merry and unaccustomed view of things, did not suggest to my mind the charge he intimated; I could not dwell on such an idea, so steadfast a home-principle were father and mother. It was different with grandfathers and grandmothers, of course; they died, since it was not particularly necessary for them to live after their children were married.

It was early June when I went to Rosville; it was now October. There was nothing more for me to discover there. My relations at home and at school were established, and it was probable that the next year's plans were all settled.

"It is the twentieth," said my friend, Helen Perkins, as we lingered in the Academy yard, after school hours. "The trees

have thinned so we can see up and down the streets. Isn't that Mr. Morgeson, who is tearing round the corner of Gold Street? Do you think he is strange-looking? I do. His hair, and eyes, and complexion are exactly the same hue: what color is it? A pale brown, or a greenish grey?"

"Is he driving this way?"

"Yes; the fore legs of his horse have nearly arrived."

I moved on in advance of Helen, towards the gate; he beckoned when he saw me, and presently reined Nell close to us. "You can decide now, what color he is," I whispered to her.

"Will you ride home?" he asked. "And shall I take you down to Bancroft's, Miss Helen?"

She would have declined riding, but I took her arm, and pushed her into the chaise, and then sprang in after her; she seized the hand-loop, in view of an upset.

"You are afraid of my horse, Miss Helen," he said, without having looked at her.

"I am afraid of your driving," she answered, leaning back, and looking behind him at me. She shook her head, and put her finger on her eyelid to make me understand that she did not like the color of his eyes.

"Cassandra is afraid of neither," he said.

"Why should I be?" I replied coldly.

We were soon at the Bancrofts', where Helen lived, which was a mile from the Academy, and half a mile from our house. When we were going home, he asked:

"Is she your intimate friend?"

"The most in school."

"Is there the usual nonsense about her?"

"What do you mean by nonsense?"

"When a girl talks about her lover, or proposes one to her friend."

"I think she is not gifted that way."

"Then I like her."

"Why should she not talk about lovers, though? The next time I see her, I will bring up the subject."

"You shall think and talk of your lessons, and nothing more, I charge you. Go on Nell," he said in a loud voice, turning into the yard, and grazing one of the gate posts, so that we struck together. I was vexed, thinking it was done purposely, and brushed my shoulder where we had come in contact, as if dust had fallen on me. I jumped out without looking at him, and ran into the house.

"Are you losing your skill in driving, Charles?" Alice asked, when we were at tea, "or is Nell too much for you? I saw you crash against the gate post."

"Did you? My hand was not steady, and we made a lurch."

"Was there a fight at the mills last night? Jesse said so."

"Jesse must mind his business."

"He told Phœbe about it."

"I knocked one of the clerks over, and sprained my wrist."

I met his eye then. "It was your right hand?" I asked.

"It was my right hand," in a deferential tone, and with a slight bow in my direction.

"Was it Parker?" she asked.

"Yes, he is a puppy; but don't talk about it."

Nothing more was said, even by Edward, who observed his father with childish gravity. I meditated on the injustice I had done him about the gate post. After tea he busied himself in the garden, among the flowers which were still remaining. I lingered in the parlor, or walked the piazza, with an undefined desire of speaking to him before I should go to my room. After he had finished his garden work he went to the stable; I heard the horses stepping about the floor, as they were taken out for his inspection. The lamps were lighted before he came in again; Alice was up stairs as usual. When I heard him coming, I opened my book, and seated myself in a corner of a sofa; he walked to the window without noticing me, and drummed on the piano.

"Does your wrist pain you, Charles?" still reading.

"A trifle," adjusting his wristband.

"Do you often knock men down in your employ?"

"When they deserve it."

"It is a generous and manly sort of pastime."

"I am a generous man, and very strong; do you know that, you little fool? Here, will you take this flower? There will be no more this year." I took it from his hand; it was a pink faintly odorous blossom.

"I love these fragile flowers best," he continued—"where I have to protect them from my own touch, even." He relapsed into forgetfulness for a moment, and then began to study his memorandum-book

"A note from the mills, Sir," said Jesse, "by one of the hands."

"Tell him to wait."

He read it, and threw it over to me. It was from Parker, who informed Mr. Morgeson that he was going by the morning's

train to Boston, thinking it was time for him to leave his employ; that, though the fault was his own in the difficulty of the day before, a Yankee could not stand a knock down. It was too damned aristocratic for an employer to have that privilege; our institutions did not permit it. He thanked Mr. Morgeson for his liberality; he couldn't thank him for being a good fellow. And would he oblige him by sending per bearer the arrears of salary?"

"Parker is in love with a factory girl. He quarrelled with one of the hands, because he was jealous of him, and would have been whipped by the man and his friends; to spare him that, I knocked him down. Do you feel better now, Cassy?"

"Better? How does it concern me?"

He laughed.

"Put Black Jake in the wagon," he called to Jesse.

Alice heard him and came down stairs; we went out on the piazza to see him off. "Why do you go?" she asked in an uneasy tone.

"I must. Won't you go too?"

She refused; but whispered to me, asking if I were afraid?

"Of what?"

"Men quarrelling."

"Cassandra, will you go?" he asked. "If not, I am off. Jump in behind, Sam, will you?"

"Go," said Alice; and she ran in for a shawl, which she wrapped round me.

"Alice," said Charles, "you are a silly woman."

"As you have always said," she answered, laughing. "Ward the blows from him, Cassandra."

"It's a pretty dark night for a ride," remarked Sam.

"I have rode in darker ones."

"I dessay," replied Sam.

"Cover your hand with my handkerchief," I said; "the wind is cutting."

"Do you wish it?"

"No, I do not wish it; it was a humanitary idea merely."

He refused to have it covered, to annoy me.

The air had a mouldy taint, and the wind blew the dead leaves round us. As we rode through the darkness, I counted the glimmering lights which flashed across our way till we got out on the high road, where they grew scarce, and the wind whistled loud about our faces. He laid his hand on my shawl. "It is too light; you will take cold."

"No."

We reached the mills, and pulled up by the corner of a building, where a light shone through a window.

"This is my office. You must go in—it is too chilly for you to wait in the wagon. Hold Jake, Sam, till I come back."

I followed him. In the farthest corner of the room where we had seen the light, behind a desk, sat Mr. Parker, with his light hair rumpled, and a pen behind his ear.

I stopped by the door; but Charles went to the desk and stood before him to intercept my view. He could not help my hearing what was said, though he spoke low.

"Did you give something to Sam, Parker, for bringing me your note at such a late hour?"

"Certainly," in a loud voice.

"He must be fifty, at least."

"I should say so," rather lower.

"Well, here is your money; you had better stay. I shall be devilish sorry for your father, who is my friend; you know he will be disappointed if you leave. You may depend that he will guess at the girl. Of course you would like to have me say I was in fault about giving you a blow—as I was. Stay. You will get over the affair. We all do. Is she handsome?"

"Beautiful," in a meek, but enthusiastic tone.

"That goes, like the flowers; but they come every year again."

"Yes?"

"Yes, I say."

"No; I'll stay and see."

Charles turned away.

"Good evening, Mr. Parker," I said, stepping forward. I had met him at several parties at Rosville, but never at our house.

"Excuse me, Miss Morgeson; I did not know you. I hope you are well."

"Come," said Charles, with his hand on the latch.

"Are you going to Mrs. Bancroft's whist party on Wednesday night, Mr. Parker?"

"Yes; Miss Perkins was kind enough to invite me."

"Cassandra, come." And Charles opened the door. I fumbled for the flower at my belt. "It's nice to have flowers so late; don't you think so?" inhaling the fragrance of my crushed specimens; "if they would but last. Will you have it?" stretching it towards him. He was about to take it, with a blush, when Charles struck it out of my hand and stepped on it.

"Are you ready now?" he said in a quick voice.

I declared it was nothing, when I found I was too ill to rise the next morning. At the end of three days, as I still felt a disinclination to get up, Alice sent for her physician. I told him I was sleepy, and felt dull pains. He requested me to sit up in bed, and rapped my shoulders and chest with his knuckles, in a forgetful way.

"Nothing serious," he said; "but like many women, you will continue to do something to keep in continual pain. If Nature does not endow your constitution with suffering, you will make up the loss by some fatal trifling, which will bring it. I dare say, now, that after this, you never will be quite well."

"I will take care of my health."

He looked into my face attentively.

"You won't—you can't. Did you ever notice your temperament?"

"No, never; what is it?"

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen, and four months."

"Is it possible? How backward you are! You are quite interesting."

"When may I get up?"

"Next week; don't drink coffee. Remember to live in the day. Avoid stirring about in the night, as you would avoid Satan. Sleep, sleep then, and you'll make that beauty of yours last longer."

"Am I a beauty? No living creature ever said so before."

"Adipose beauty."

"Fat?"

"No; not that exactly. Good day.'

He came again, and asked me questions concerning my father and mother; what my grandparents died of; and whether any of my family were strumous. He struck me as being very odd.

My school friends were attentive, but I only admitted Helen Perkins to see me. Her liking for me opened my heart still more towards her. She was my first intimate friend—and my last. Though younger than I, she was more experienced, and had already passed through scenes I knew nothing of, which had sobered her judgment, and given her feelings a practical tinge. She was noted for having the highest spirits of any girl in school—another result of her experiences. She never

allowed them to appear fluctuating; she was, therefore, an aid to me, whose moods varied.

After my illness came a sense of change. I had lost that careless security in my strength which I had always possessed, and was troubled with vague doubts, that made me feel I needed help from without.

I did not see Charles while I was ill, for he was absent most of the time. I knew when he was at home, by the silence which pervaded the premises. When he was not there, Alice spread the children in all directions, and the servants gave tongue.

He was not at home the day I went down stairs, and I missed him, continually asking myself, "Why do I?" As I sat with Alice in the garden room, I said, "Alice." She looked up from her sewing. "I am thinking of Charles."

"Yes. He will be glad to see you again."

"Is he really related to me?"

"He told you so, did he not? And his name certainly is Morgeson."

"But we are wholly unlike, are we not?"

"Wholly; but why do you ask?"

"He influences me so strongly."

"Influences you?" she echoed.

"Yes;" and, with an effort, "I believe, I influence him."

"You are very handsome," she said, with a little sharpness. "So are flowers," I said to myself.

"It is not that Alice," I answered peevishly; "you know better."

"You are peculiar then; it may be he likes you for being so. He is odd, you know; but his oddity never troubles me." And she resumed her sewing, with a placid face.

"Veronica is odd, also," was my thought; "but oddity there runs in a wrong direction." Her image appeared to me, pale, delicate, unyielding. I washed like a weed at the base of her character.

"You should see my sister, Alice."

"Charles spoke of her; he says she plays beautifully. If you feel strong next week, we will go to Boston, and make our winter purchases. By the way, I hope you are not nervous. To go back to Charles, I have noticed how little you say to him. You know he never talks. The influence you speak of —it does not make you dislike him?"

"No; I meant to say,—my choice of words must be poor— that it was possible I might be thinking too much of him; he

is your husband, you know, though I do not think he is particularly interesting, or pleasing."

She laughed, as if highly amused, and said; "Well, about our dresses. You need a ball dress, so do I; for we shall have balls this winter, and if the children are well, we will go. I think, too, that you had better get a grey cloth pelisse, with a fur trimming. We dress so much at church."

"Perhaps," I said. "And how will a grey hat with feathers look? I must first write father, and ask for more money."

"Of course; but he allows you all you want."

"He is not so very rich; we do not live as handsomely as you do."

It was tea time when we had finished our confab, and Alice sent me to bed soon after. I was comfortably drowzy when I heard Charles driving into the stable. "There he is," I thought, with a light heart, for I felt better since I had spoken to Alice of him. Her matter-of-fact air had blown away the cobwebs that had gathered across my fancy.

I saw him at the breakfast table the next morning. He was noting something in his memorandum book, which excused him from offering me his hand; but he spoke kindly, said he was glad to see me, and hoped that I was well, and could find a breakfast that I liked.

"For some reason or other, I do not eat so much as I did in Surrey."

Alice laughed, and I blushed; the blood went into my head in a volume.

"What do you think, Charles?" she said, "Cassandra seems worried by the influence, as she calls it, you have upon each other."

"Does she?"

He raised his eyes to mine. A blinding, intelligent light flowed from them, which I could not defy. The blood thundered back to my heart.

"You think Cassandra is not like you," he continued, with a curious intonation.

"I told her that your oddities never troubled me."

"That is right."

"To-day, Alice, I shall go back to school."

"You must ride," she answered.

"Jesse will drive you up," said Charles, rising. Alice called him back, to tell him her plan of the Boston visit.

"Certainly; go by all means," he said, and went on his way.

I made my application to father. telling him I had nothing to wear. He answered with haste, begging me to clothe myself at once.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was November when we returned from Boston. One morning when the frost sparkled on the dead leaves, which still dropped on the walks, Helen Perkins and I were taking a stroll down Silver street, behind the Academy, when we saw Dr. White coming down the street in his sulky, rocking from side to side like a cradle. He stopped when he came up to us.

"Do ye sit up late of evenings, Miss Morgeson?"

"No, Doctor; only once a week or so."

"You are a case." And he meditatively pulled his shaggy whiskers with a loose buckskin glove. "There's a ripple coming under your eyes already; what did I tell you? Let me see, did you say you were like father or mother?"

"I look like my father. By the way, Doctor, I am studying my temperament. You will make an infidel of me by your inquiries."

Helen laughed, and staring at him, called him a bear, and told him he ought to live in a hospital, where he would have plenty of sick women to teaze.

"I should find few like you there."

He chirruped to his horse, but checked it again, put out his head and called, "Keep your feet warm, won't you? And read Shakespeare."

Helen said that Dr. White had been crossed in love, and long after had married a deformed woman—for science's sake, perhaps. His talent was well known out of Rosville; but he was unambitious and eccentric.

"He is interested in you, Cass, that I see. Are you quite well? What about the change you spoke of?"

"Dr. White has theories; he has attached one to me. Nature has adjusted us so nicely, he thinks, with fine strings; if we laugh too much, or cry too long, a knot slips somewhere, which 'all the king's men,' can't take up again. Perhaps he judges women by his deformed wife. Men do judge that way, I suppose, and then pride themselves on their experience, commencing their speeches about us, with 'you women.' I'll

answer your question, though,—there's a blight creeping over me, or a mildew."

"Is there a worm i' the bud ?"

"There may be one at the root ; my top is green and flourishing, isn't it ?"

"You expect to be in a state of beatitude always. What is a mote of dust in another's eye, in yours is a cataract. You are mad at your blindness, and fight the air because you can't see."

"I feel that I see very little, especially when I understand the clearness of your vision. Your good sense is monstrous."

'It will come right somehow, with you ; when twenty years are wasted, maybe," she answered sadly. "There's the first bell ! I haven't a word yet of my rhetoric lesson," opening her book and chanting, 'man, thou pendulum betwixt a smile and tear.' "Are you going to Professor Simpson's class ?" shutting it again. "I know the new dance ;" and she began to execute it on the walk. The door of a house opposite us opened, and a tall youth came out, hat in hand. Without evincing surprise he advanced towards Helen, gravely dancing the same step ; they finished the figure with unmoved countenances. "Come now," I said, taking her arm. He then made a series of bows to us, retreating to the house, with his face towards us, till he reached the door and closed it. He was tall and stout, with red hair, and piercing black eyes, and looked about twenty-three. "Who can that be, Helen ?"

"A stranger ; probably some young man come to Dr. Price, or a law student. He is new here, at all events. His is not an obscure face ; if it had been seen, we should have known it."

"We shall meet him, then."

And we did, the very next day, which was Wednesday, in the hall, where we went to hear the boys declaim. I saw him, sitting by himself in a chair, instead of being with the classes. He was in a brown study, unaware that he was observed ; both hands were in his pockets, and his legs were stretched out till his pantaloons had receded up his boots, whose soles he knocked together, oblivious of the noise they made. In spite of his red hair, I thought him handsome, with his Roman nose and firm, clefted chin. Helen and I were opposite him at the lower part of the hall, but he did not see us, till the first boy mounted the platform, and began to spout one of Cicero's orations ; then he looked up, and a smile spread over his face. He withdrew his hands from his pockets, updrew his legs, and surveyed the long row of girls opposite, beginning at the head

of the hall. As his eyes reached us a flash of recognition shot across; he raised his hand as if to salute us, and I noticed that it was remarkably handsome, small and white, and ornamented with an old-fashioned ring. It was our habit, after the exercises were over, to gather round Dr. Price, to exchange a few words with him. And this occasion was no exception, for Dr. Price, with his double spectacles, and his silk handkerchief in his hand, was answering our questions, when feeling a touch, he stopped, turned hastily, and saw the stranger.

"Will you be so good as to introduce me to the two young ladies near you? We have met before, but I do not know their names."

"Ah," said the Doctor, taking off his spectacles and wiping them leisurely; then raising his voice, said, "Miss Cassandra Morgeson, and Miss Helen Perkins, Mr. Ben Somers, of Belem, requests me to present him to you. I add the information that he is, although a senior, suspended from Harvard College, for participating in a disgraceful fight. It is at your option, to notice him."

"If he would be kind enough," said Mr. Somers, moving towards us, "to say that I won it."

"With such hands?" I asked.

"Oh, Somers," interposed the Doctor, "have you much knowledge of the Bellevue Pickersgill's pedigree?"

"Certainly; my grandpa, Desmond Pickersgill, although he came to this country as a cabin boy, was brother to an English earl. This is our coat of arms," showing the ring he wore.

"That is a great fact," answered the Doctor.

"This lad," addressing me, "belongs to the family I spoke of to you, a member of which married one of your name."

"Is it possible? I never heard much of my father's family."

"No," said the Doctor drily; "Somers has no coat of arms. I expected, when I asked you, to hear that the Pickersgills' history was at your fingers' ends."

"Only above the second joint of the third finger of my left hand."

I thought Dr. Price was embarrassing.

"Are your family from Troy?" Mr. Somers asked me, in a low tone.

"Do you dislike my name? Is that of Veronica a better one? It is my sister's, and we were named by our great grandfather, who married a Somers, a hundred years ago."

Miss Black, my Barmouth teacher, came into my mind, for I had said the same thing to her in my first interview; but I

was recalled from my wandering by Mr. Somers asking, "Are you looking for your sister? Far be it from me to disparage any act of your great grandfather's, but I prefer the name of Veronica, and fancy that the person to whom the name belongs has a narrow face, with eyes near together, and a quantity of light hair, which falls straight; that she has long hands; is fond of Gothic architecture, and has a will of her own."

"But she never dances," said Helen.

There was a whist party at somebody's house, every Wednesday evening. Alice had selected the present for one, and had invited more than the usual number. I asked Mr. Somers to come.

"Dress coat?" he inquired.

"Oh, no."

"Is Rosville highly starched?"

"Oh, no."

"I'll be sure to go into society then, as long as I can go limp."

He bowed, and retiring with Dr. Price, walked through the green with him, perusing the ground.

I wore a dark blue silk for the party, with a cinnamon-colored satin stripe through it; a dress that Alice had supervised. She fastened a pair of pearl ear-rings in my ears, and told me that I never looked better. It was the first time since grandfather's death that I had worn any dress except a black one. My short sleeves were puffed velvet, and a lace tucker was drawn with a blue ribbon across the corsage. As I adjusted my dress, a triumphant sense of beauty possessed me; Cleopatra could not have been more convinced of her charms, than I was of mine. "It is a pleasant thing," I thought, "that a woman's mind may come and go by the gate Beautiful."

I went down before Alice, who stayed with the children till she heard the first ring at the door.

"Where is Charles?" I asked, after we had greeted the Bancrofts.

"He will come in time to play, for he likes whist; do you?"

"No."

We did not speak again, but I noticed how gay and agreeable she was through the evening.

Ben Somers came early, suffering from a fit of nonchalance, to the disgust of several young men, standard beaux, who regarded him with an impertinence which delighted him.

"Here comes," he said, "'a daughter of the gods, divinely

tall, and most divinely fair.' " Meaning me, which deepened their disgust.

" Come to the piano," I said. Helen was there, but his eyes did not rest upon her, but upon Charles, whom I saw for the first time that evening. I introduced them.

" Cassandra," said Charles, " let us make up a game in the East room. Miss Helen, will you join ? Mr. Somers, will you take a hand ?"

" Certainly. Miss Morgeson, will you be my partner ?"

" Will you play with me then, Miss Helen ?" asked Charles.

" If you desire it," she answered, rather ungraciously.

We took our seats in the East room, which opened from the parlor, at a little table by the chimney. The astral lamp from the centre table in the parlor, shone into our room, intercepting any view towards us. I sat by the window, the curtain of which was drawn apart, and the shutters unclosed. A few yellow leaves stuck against the panes, unstirred by the melancholy wind, which sighed through the crevices. Charles was at my right hand, by the mantel ; the light from a candelabra illuminated him and Mr. Somers, while Helen and I were in shadow. Mr. Somers dealt the cards, and we began the game.

" We shall beat you," he said to Charles.

" Not unless Cassandra has improved," he replied.

I promised to do my best, but soon grew weary, and we were beaten. To my surprise Mr. Somers was vexed. His imperturbable manner vanished ; he sat erect, and his eyes sparkled, as he told me that I must play better. We began another game, which he was confident of winning. I kept my eyes on the cards, and there was silence till Mr. Somers exclaimed, " Don't trump now, Mr. Morgeson."

I watched the table for his card to fall, but as it did not, looked at him for the reason. He had forgotten us, and was lost in contemplation, with his eyes fixed upon my throat. The recognition of some impulse had mastered him. I must prevent Helen and Mr. Somers perceiving this ! I shuffled the cards noisily, rustled my dress, and looked right and left for my handkerchief ; but the spell was not broken.

" How the wind moans !" said Helen. I understood her tone ; she understood him, as I did.

" I *like* Rosville, Miss Perkins," said Mr. Somers.

" Do you ?" said Charles, clicking down his card, as though his turn had just come. " I must trump this in spite of you."

" I am tired of playing," I said.

" We are beaten, Miss Perkins," said Mr. Somers, rising

"Bring it here," to a girl, going by with a tray and glasses. He drank a goblet of wine, before he offered us any. "Give us music?" he asked, offering his arm to Helen, and taking her away. Charles and I remained at the table. "By the way," he said abruptly, "I have forgotten to give you a letter from your father—here it is." I stretched my hand across the table, but he retained it. I left my chair and stood beside him, and he held the letter between us.

"Cassandra," he said at last, growing ashy pale, "is there any other world than this we are now in?"

I raised my eyes, and saw my face in the glass over the mantel, above his head. I was pale also, and my eyes glittered.

"What do you see?" he asked, starting up.

I pointed to the glass. Our eyes, as they exchanged glances, wore the same inscrutable expression.

"I begin to think," I said, "there is another world—one peopled with creatures like those we see there. What are they—cowardly, base and false?"

"Cowardly!" he said furiously; "you will make me crush you! And false? Do we lie to each other?"

He turned me from the glass. "See!"

Helen struck a blow on the piano keys.

"Where is that letter, Charles?"

He looked for it on the floor, and found it crumpled with his grasp. I heard a side door shut, and stood alone. Pinching my cheeks, and wiping my lips to force the color back to them, I went into the parlor. Mr. Somers came to me with a glass of wine. It was full, and I spilled half of it; it trickled down my dress, but he made no offer to wipe it off. After that, he devoted himself to Alice; talked lightly with her, observing her closely. I made the tour of the party, overlooked the whist players, and chatted with the talkers finally taking a seat by myself, where Helen joined me.

"I am going," she said.

"Why don't they all go?"

"Look at Mr. Somers playing the agreeable to Mrs. Morgeson. What kind of a woman is she, Cass?"

"Go and learn for yourself."

"I fear I have not the gift for divining people that you have."

"Do you hear the wind moan now, Helen?"

She turned crimson as she answered: "It must have died away."

"Let us go to the window; I think it rains."

We stood within the curtains, to listen to its pattering on the floor of the piazza, and trickling down the glass like tears.

"If one could weep as quietly as this rain falls, and keep the face as unwrinkled as the glass, it would be pretty to weep," I said.

"Is it hard for you to cry?"

"I can't remember; it is some time since."

My ear caught the sound of a step on the piazza.

"Who is that?" she asked.

"It is a man."

"Morgeson?"

"Morgeson."

"Cassandra?"

"Helen!"

"I can cry."

"Cry away, then. Give me a fierce shower of tears, with thunder and lightning between, if you like. Don't sop, and soak, and drizzle."

The step came close to the window; it was not in harmony with the rain and darkness, but with the hot beating of my heart.

"We are breaking up," said Mr. Somers. "Mr. Bancroft's carriage is ready, I am bid to say. It is inky outside."

"Yes," said Helen, "I am quite ready."

"There are a dozen chaises in the yard; Mr. Morgeson is there, and lanterns. He is at home among horses, I believe."

"Do you like horses?" I asked.

"Not in the least."

Somebody called Helen.

"Good night, Cass."

"Good night; keep out of the rain."

"Good night, Miss Morgeson," said Mr. Somers, when she had gone. "Good night and good morning. My acquaintance with you has begun; it will never end. You thought me a boy; I am just your age."

"'Never' is a long word, Boy Somers."

"It is."

It rained all night; I wearied of its monotonous fall; if I slept it turned into a voice which was pent up in the letter we found on the floor, and which I could not open.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Alice was unusually gay the next morning. She praised Mr. Somers, and could not imagine what had been the cause of his being expelled from college.

"Don't you like him, Cassandra? His family are unexceptionable."

"So is he, I believe, except in his fists. But how did you learn that his family were unexceptionable?"

"Charles inquired in Boston, and heard that his mother was one of the greatest heiresses in Belem."

"Did you enjoy last night, Alice?"

"Yes; I am fond of whist parties. You noticed that Charles has not a remarkable talent that way. Did he speak to Mr. Somers at all, while you played? I was too busy to come in. By the by, I must go now, and see if the room is in order."

I followed her with my bonnet in my hand, for it was school time. She looked about, and then went up to the mantel, and taking out the candle ends from the candelabra, looked in the glass, and said, "I am a fright, this morning."

"Am I?" I asked over her shoulder, for I was nearly a head taller.

"No; you are too young to look jaded in the morning. Your eyes are as clear as a child's; and how blue they are"

"Mild and babyish-like, are they not? almost green with innocence But Charles has devilish eyes, don't you think so?"

She turned, with her mouth open in astonishment, and her hand full of candle-ends. "Cassandra Morgeson, are you possessed?"

"He is."

"You are cracked."

"Good-bye."

I only saw Mr. Somers at prayers during the following fortnight. But in that short time he made many acquaintances. Helen told me that he had decided to study law with Judge Ryder, and that he had asked her how long I expected to stay in Rosville. Nothing eccentric had been discovered in his

behavior ; but she was convinced that he would astonish us before he had been among us long. The first Wednesday after my party, I was absent from the Elocutionary exercise ; but the second came round, and I took my place as usual beside Helen.

"This will be Mr. Somers's first and last appearance on our stage," she whispered ; "some whim prompts him to come today."

He delighted Dr. Price by translating from the Agamemnon of Eschuylus.

"Re-enter Clytemnestra.

Men ! Citizens ! ye Elders of Argos present here."

"Who was Agamemnon ?" I whispered.

"He gave Cassandra her last ride."

"Did he upset ?"

"Study Greek," she replied, frowning at him as he stepped from the platform.

We went to walk in Silver Street after school, and he joined us.

"Do you read Greek ?" he asked her.

"My father is a Greek Professor, and he made me study it when I was a little girl."

"The name of Cassandra inspired me to rub up my knowledge of the tragedies."

Helen and he had a Homeric talk, while I silently walked by them, thinking that Cassandra would have suited Veronica, and that an insignificant name would have suited me. From some reason I did not discover, Helen began to loiter, pretending that she wanted to have a look at the clouds. But when I looked back, her head was bent to the ground. Mr. Somers offered to carry my books.

"Carry Helen's ; she is smaller than I am."

"Confound Helen !"

"And the books, too, if you like."

"I wish you knew my sister ; she bottles up her feelings so splendidly, she would be an example for you."

"Helen, why do you loiter ? It is time for dinner. We must go home."

"I am quite ready for my dinner," she replied. "Won't you come to our house this afternoon, and take tea with me ?"

"Oh, Miss Perkins, do invite me also," he begged. "I want to bring Tennyson to you."

"Is he related to Agamemnon ?" I asked.

"I'll ask Mrs. Bancroft if I may invite you, if you are sure that you would like a stupid, family tea."

"I am positive that I should Tennyson, though an eminent Grecian, is not related to the person you spoke of."

We parted at the foot of Silver Street, with the expectation of meeting before night. Helen sent me word not to fail, as she had sent to Mr. Somers, and that Mrs. Bancroft was already preparing tea. Alice drove down there with me, to call on Mrs. Bancroft. The two ladies compared children, and by the time Alice was ready to go, Mr. Somers arrived. She staid a few moments more to chat with him, and when she went at last, told me Charles would come for me on his way from the mills.

My eyes wandered in the direction of Mr. Somers. His said, "No; go home with *me*."

"Very well, Alice, whatever is convenient."

Mrs. Bancroft was a motherly woman, and Mr. Bancroft was a fatherly man. Five children sat round the tea table, distinguished by the Bancroft nose. Helen and I were seated each side of Mr. Somers. The table reminded me of our table at Surrey, it was so covered with vast viands; but the dishes were alike, and handsome. I wondered whether mother had bought the new china in Boston, and, buttering my second hot biscuit, I thought of Veronica; then, of the sea. How did it look? Hark! Its voice was in my ear! Could I climb the housetop, I believed I should see the mist which hung over our low-lying sea by Surrey.

"Will you take quince or apple jelly, Miss Morgeson?" asked Mrs. Bancroft.

"Apple, if you please."

"Do you write that sister of yours often?" asked Mr. Somers, as he gave me the apple jelly.

"I never write her."

"Will you tell me something of Surrey?"

"Mr. Somers, shall I give you a cup custard?"

"No, thank you, mam."

"Surrey is lonely, evangelical, primitive."

"Belem is dreary too; most of it goes to Boston, or to India."

"Does it smell of sandal wood? And has everybody tea-caddies? Vide Indian stories."

"We have a crate full of queer ware."

"Are you going to study law with Judge Ryder?" Mr. Bancroft inquired.

"I think so."

Helen pushed back her chair; Mrs. Bancroft stood in her place long enough for us to reach the parlor door, and then resumed her seat.

"And I must go to the office," Mr. Bancroft said, from the threshold, so we had the parlor to ourselves; but Mr. Somers could not read from Tennyson—for he had forgotten to bring the book.

"Compact," he said. "I must be called Ben Somers by you; and may I call you Cassandra, and Helen?"

"Yes," we answered.

"Now we may be confidential."

And we were. I was drawn into speaking of my life at home, and my remarks, made without premeditation, taught me that I possessed certain ideas and feelings pertaining to it, which I had not thought of. I felt no shyness before him, and although I saw his interest in me, no agitation. Helen was also moved to tell us that she was engaged. She rolled up her sleeve and showed us a bracelet, printed in ink on her arm, with the initials, "L. N." Those of her cousin, she said; he was a sailor, and sometime, she supposed, they would marry.

"How could you consent to have your arm so defaced?" I asked.

Her eyes flashed as she replied, that she had not looked upon the mark in that light before.

"We shall all be tattooed," he said.

"I am already," I thought.

He told us in his turn, that he should be rich. "There are five of us. My mother's fortune cuts up rather; but it won't be divided till the youngest is twenty-one. I assure you we are impatient."

"Some one of your family happened to marry a Morgeson," I remarked.

"I wrote father about that; he must know the circumstance, though he never has a chance to expatiate on *his* side of the house. Poor man! he has the gout, and passes his time in experiments with temperature and diet. Shall you ever visit Belem? I shall go to Surrey."

Mrs. Bancroft interrupted us, and soon after Mr. Bancroft arrived, redolent of smoke. Ten o'clock came, and nobody for me. At half past ten I put on my shawl to walk home, when Charles drove up to the gate.

"Say," said Ben Somers, in a low voice "that you will walk with me."

"I am not too late, Cassandra?" said Charles, coming up the steps, bowing to all. "I am glad you are ready; Nell is impatient."

"My dear," asked Mrs. Bancroft, "how dare you trust to the mercy of such vicious beasts as Mr. Morgeson loves to drive?"

"Come," he said, touching my arm.

"Won't you walk?" said Mr. Somers aloud.

"Walk?" he echoed. "No."

I followed him. Nell had already bitten off a paling; as he untied her he boxed her ears. She did not jump, for she knew the hand that struck her. We rushed swiftly away through the long shadows of the moonlight.

"Charles, what did Ben Somers do at Harvard?"

"He was in a night-fight, and he sometimes got drunk; it is a family habit."

"Pray, why did you inquire about him?"

"From the interest I feel in him."

"You like him then?"

"I detest him; do you?"

"I like him."

He bent down and looked into my face.

"You are telling me a lie."

I made no reply.

"I should beg your pardon, but I will not. I am going away to-morrow. Give me your hand, and say farewell."

"Farewell then. Is Alice up? I see a light moving in her chamber."

"If you do, she is not waiting for me."

"I have been making coffee for you," she said, as soon as we entered, "in my French biggin. I have packed your valise, too, Charles, and have ordered your breakfast. Cassy, we will breakfast after he has gone."

"Go to bed," he said. "I have to sit up to write. See that the horses are exercised. Ask Parker to drive them. The men will be here to-morrow to enlarge the conservatory."

"Yes?"

"I shall get a better stock, while I am away."

I sipped my coffee; Alice yawned fearfully, with her hand on the coffee pot, ready to pour again. "Why Charles," she exclaimed, "there is no cream in your coffee."

"No, there isn't," looking into his cup; "nor sugar."

She threw a lump at him, which he caught, laughing one of his abrupt laughs.

"They are extraordinarily affectionate," I thought.

"Why do you tempt me, Alice?" I said. "Doctor White says I must not drink coffee."

"Tempted!" Charles exclaimed. "She is never tempted. What she does, she does because she will. Don't worry yourself, Alice, about her."

"Because I will," I repeated.

A nervous foreboding possessed me, the moment I entered my room. Was it the coffee? Twice in the night I lighted my candle, looked at the little French clock on the mantel, and under the bed. At last I fell asleep, but starting violently from its oblivious dark, became aware that the darkness of the room was sentient. A breath passed over my face; but I caught no sound, though I held my breath to listen for one. I moved my hands before me then, but they came in contact with nothing. My forebodings passed away, and I slept till Alice rang a bell for me. I sat up in bed philosophizing, and examining the position of the chairs, the tops of the tables, and the door. No change had taken place. But my eyes happened to fall on my handkerchief, which had dropped by the bedside. I picked it up; there was a dusty footprint upon it. The bell rang again, and throwing it under the bed, I dressed and ran down. Alice was taking breakfast, tired of waiting. She said the baby had cried till after midnight, and that Charles never came to bed at all.

"Do eat this hot toast; it has just come in."

'I shall stay at home to-day, Alice, I feel chilly; it is cold."

"You must have a constant fire in your room."

"Let me have one to-day; I should like to sit there."

She gave orders for the fire, and went herself to see that it burned. Soon I was sitting before it, with my feet on a stool, and a poker in my hand, with which I smashed the smoky lumps of coal which smouldered in the grate.

I staid there all day, looking out of the window when I heard the horses tramp in the stable, or a step on the piazza. It was a dull November day; the atmosphere was glutinous with a pale mist, which made the leaves stick together in bunches, helplessly cumbering the ground. The boughs dropped silent tears over them, under the grey, pitiless sky. I read Byron, which was the only book in the house, I believe; for neither Charles nor Alice read anything except the newspapers. I looked over my small stores also, and my papers, which consisted of father's letters. As I was sorting them, the thought struck me of writing to Veronica, and I arranged my

portfolio, pulled the table nearer the fire, and began, "Dear Veronica." After writing this a few times I gave it up; cut off the "Dear Veronicas," and made lamplighters of the paper.

Ben Somers called at noon, to inquire the reason of my absence from school, and left a book for me. It was the poems he had spoken of. I lighted on "Fatima," read it, and copied it. In the afternoon Alice came up with the baby.

'Let me braid your hair," she said, "in a different fashion."

I assented; the baby was bestowed on the rug, and a chair was put before the glass, that I might witness the operation.

"What magnificent hair!" she said, as she unrolled it. "It is a yard long."

"It is a regular mane, isn't it?"

She began combing it; the baby crawled under the bed, and coming out with the handkerchief in its hand, crept up to her, trying to make her take it. She had combed my hair over my face, but I saw it.

"Do I hurt you, Cass?"

"No, do I ever hurt you, Alice?" And I divided the long bands over my eyes, and looked up at her.

"Were any of your family ever cracked? I have long suspected you of a disposition that way."

"The child is choking itself with that handkerchief."

She took it, and tossing it on the bed, gave Byron to the child to play with, and went on with the hair-dressing.

"There now," she said, "is not this a masterpiece of barber's craft? Look at the back of your head, and then come down."

"Yes, I'll go, for I feel better."

When I returned to my room again it was like meeting a confidential friend.

A few days after, father came to Rosville. I invited Ben Somers and Helen to spend with us the only evening he staid. After they were gone we sat in my room, and talked over many matters. His spirits were not as buoyant as usual, and I felt an undefinable anxiety, which I did not mention. When he said that mother was more abstracted than ever, he sighed. I asked him how many years he thought I must waste; eighteen had already gone for nothing.

"You must go on in the way ordained, waste or no waste. I have tried to make your life differ from mine at the same age, for you are like me, and I wanted to see the result."

"We shall see."

"Veronica has been let alone—is master of herself, except

when in a rage. She is an extraordinary girl; independent of kith and kin, and everything else. I assure you, Miss Cass, she is very good."

"Does she ever ask for me?"

"I never heard her mention your name but once. She asked one day, what your teachers were. You do not love each other, I suppose. What hatred there is between near relations! Bitter, bitter," he said, calmly, as if he thought of some object, now incapable of exciting the hatred he spoke of.

"That's grandfather John Morgeson you think of. I do not hate Veronica. I think I love her; at least, she interests me."

"The same creeping in the blood of us all, Cassy. I detested my father; but thank God I behaved decently towards him. It must be late."

As he kissed me, and we stood face to face, I recognized my likeness to him. "He has had experiences that I shall never know," I thought. "Why should I tell him mine?" But an overpowering impulse seized me to speak to him of Charles. "Father," and I put my hands on his shoulders. He set his candle back on the table.

"You look hungry-eyed, eager. What is it? Are you well?"

"No."

"You are faded a little. Your face has lost its firmness."

My impulse died a sudden death. I buried it with a swallow.

"Do you think so?"

"You are all alike. Let me tell you something; don't get sick. If you are, hide it as much as possible. Men do not like sick women."

"I'll end this fading business as soon as possible. It *is* late. Good night, dad."

I examined my face as soon as he closed the door. There *was* a change. Not the change from health to disease, but an expression lurking there—a reflection of some unmoved, secret power, which attracted me so that I longed to prove it.

The next morning was passed with Alice and the children. He was pleased with her prettiness and sprightliness, and his gentle manner and disposition pleased her. She asked him to let me spend another year in Rosville; but he said that I must return to Surrey, and that he never should allow me to leave home again.

"She will marry."

"Not early."

"Never, I believe," I said.

"It will be as well."

"Yes," she replied; "if you leave her a fortune, or teach her some trade, that will give her an importance among men."

Her wisdom astonished me.

He was sorry, he said, that Morgeson was not at home. When he mentioned him I looked out of the window, and saw Ben Somers coming into the yard. As he entered, Alice gave father a meaning look, which was not lost upon me, and which induced him to observe Ben closely.

"The train is nearly due, Mr. Morgeson; shall I walk to the station with you?"

"Certainly; come, Cassy."

On the way, he touched me, making a sign towards Ben. I shook my head, which appeared satisfactory. The rest of the time was consumed in the discussion of the relationship, which ended in an invitation, as I expected, to Surrey.

"The governor is not worried, is he?" asked Ben, on our way back.

"No more than I am."

"What a pity Morgeson was not at home!"

"Why a pity?"

"I should like to see them together, they are such antipodal men. Does your father know him well?"

"Does any one know him well?"

"Yes, I know him. I do not like him. He is a savage, living by his instincts, with one element of civilization—he loves Beauty—beauty like yours." He turned pale when he said this, but went on. "He has never seen a woman like you: who has? Forgive me, but I watch you both."

"I have perceived it."

"I supposed so, and it makes you more wilful."

"You said you were a boy."

"Yes, but I have had one or two manly wickednesses. I have done with them, I hope."

"So that you have leisure to pry into those of others."

"You do not forgive me."

"I like you; but what can I do?"

"Keep up your sophistry to the last."

CHAPTER XIX.

Alice and I were preparing for the first ball, when Charles came home, having been absent several weeks. The conservatory was finished, and looked well, jutting from the garden-

room, which we used often, since the weather had been cold. The flowers and plants it was filled with, were more fragrant and beautiful, than rare. I never saw him look so genial as when he inspected it with us. Alice was in good humor, also; for he had brought her a set of jewels.

"Is it not her birth-day," he said, when he gave her the jewel-case, "or something, that I can give Cassandra this?" taking a little box from his pocket.

"Oh yes," said Alice; "show it to us."

"Will you have it?" he asked me.

I held out my hand, and he put on the third finger a diamond ring, which was like a star.

"How well it looks on your long hand!" said Alice.

"What unsuspected tastes I find I have!" I said. "I am passionately fond of rings: this delights me."

His swarthy face flushed with pleasure at my words; but according to his wont, he said nothing.

A few days after his return, a man came into the yard, leading a powerful horse chafing in his halter, which he took to the stable. Charles asked me to look at a new purchase he had made in Pennsylvania. The strange man was lounging about the stalls when we went in, inspecting the horses with a knowing air

"I declare, Sir," said Jesse. "I am afeared to tackle this ere animal; he's a reglar brute, and no mistake."

"He'll be tame enough; he is but four years old."

"He's never been in a carriage," said the man.

"Lead him out, will you?"

The man obeyed. The horse was a fine creature, black, and thick-maned; but the whites of his eyes were not clear; they were streaked with red, and he attempted continually to turn his nostrils inside out. Altogether, I thought him diabolical.

"What's the matter with his eyes?" Charles asked.

"I thinks, Sir," the man replied, "as how they got inflamed like, in the boat coming from York. It's nothing perticalar, I believe."

Alice declared it was too bad, when she heard there was another horse in the stable. She would not look at him, and said she would never ride with Charles when he drove him.

I had been taking lessons of Professor Simpson, and was ready for the Ball. All the girls from the Academy were going in white, except Helen, who was to wear pink silk. It was to be a Military Ball, and strangers were expected. Ben Somers, and our Rosville beaux, were of course to be there, all in

uniform, except Ben, who preferred the dress of a gentleman, he said,—silk stockings, pumps, and a white cravat.

We were dressed by nine o'clock, Alice in black velvet, with a wreath of flowers in her black hair—I in a light blue velvet boddice, and white silk skirt. We were waiting for the Ball hack to come for us, as that was the custom, for no one owned a close coach in Rosville, when Charles brought in some splendid scarlet flowers which he gave to Alice.

"Where are Cassandra's ?"

"She does not care for flowers; besides, she would throw them away on her first partner."

He put us in the coach, and went back. I was glad he did not come with us, and gave myself up to the excitement of my first Ball. Alice was surrounded by her acquaintance at once, and I was asked to dance a quadrille by Mr. Parker, whose gloves were much too large, and whose white trowsers were much too long.

"I kept the flower you gave me," he said in a breathless way.

"Oh yes, I remember; mustn't we forward now ?"

"Mr Morgeson's very fond of flowers."

"So he is. How de do, Miss Ryder ?"

Miss Ryder, my vis-a-vis, bowed, looking scornfully at my partner, who was only a clerk, while hers was a law student. I immediately turned to Mr. Parker with affable smiles, and went into a kind of dumb show of conversation, which made him warm and uncomfortable. Mrs. Judge Ryder sailed by, on Ben Somers's arm.

"Put your shoulders down," she whispered to her daughter, who had poked one very much out of her dress. "My love," she spoke aloud, "you mustn't dance *every* set."

"No, ma," and she passed on, Ben giving a faint cough, for my benefit. We could not find Alice after the dance was over. A brass band alternated with the quadrille band, and it played so loudly that we had to talk at the top of our voices to be heard. Mine soon gave out, and I begged Mr. Parker to bring Helen, for I had not yet seen her. She was with Dr. White, who had dropped in to see the miserable spectacle. The air, he said, shaking his finger at me, was already miasmal; it would be infernal by midnight. Christians ought not to be there. "Go home early, Miss. Your mother never went to a Ball, I'll warrant."

"We are wiser than our mothers."

"And wickeder; you will send for me to-morrow."

"Your Valenciennes lace excruciates the Ryders," said Helen. "I was standing near Mrs. Judge Ryder, and the girls, just now. 'Did you ever see such an upstart?' And, 'What an extravagant dress she has on—it is ridiculous,' Josephine Ryder said. When Ben Somers heard this attack on you, he told them that your lace was an heir-loom. Here he is."

Mr. Parker took her away for the next quadrille; Ben Somers went in pursuit of a place where there was a seat. The quadrille was over; I was engaged for the next, and he had not come back. I saw nothing of him till the country dance before supper. He was at the foot of the long line, opposite a pretty girl in blue, looking very solemn and stately. I took off the glove from the hand which wore the new diamond, and held it up, expecting him to look my way soon. Its flash caught his eyes, as they roamed up and down, and, as I again expected, he left his place and came behind me.

"Where did you get that ring?" wiping his face with his handkerchief.

"Ask Alice."

"You are politic."

"Handsome, is n't it?

"And valuable; it cost as much as the new horse."

"Have you made a memorandum of it?"

"Destiny has brilliant spokes in her wheel, hasn't she?"

"Is that from the Greek tragedies?"

"To your places, gentlemen," the floor manager called, and the band struck up the Fisher's Hornpipe. At supper, I saw Ben Somers, still with the pretty girl in blue; but he came to my chair to ask me if I did not think she was a pretty toy for a man to play with.

"How much wine have you drank? Enough to do justice to the family annals?"

"Really, you have been well informed. No, I have *not* drank enough for that; but Mrs. Ryder has sent her virgins home without me. I am afraid their lamps are upset again. I drink nothing after to-night. You shall not ask again, 'How much.'"

My fire was out when I reached home. My head was burning and aching. I was too tired to untwist my hair, and I pulled and dragged at my dress, which seemed to have a hundred fastenings. Creeping into bed, I perceived the odor of flowers, and looking at my table discovered a bunch of white roses.

"Roses are nonsense, and life is nonsense," I thought.

When I opened my eyes, Alice was standing by the bed, with the glass of roses in her hand.

"Charles put these roses here, hey?'

"I suppose so; throw them out of the window, and me too; my head is splitting."

"To make amends for not giving you any last night," she went on; "he is quite chi dish."

"Can't you unbraid my hair, it hurts my head so."

She felt my hands. I was in a fever, she said, and ran down for Charles. "Cass is sick, in spite of your white roses."

"The devil take the roses. Can't you get up, Cassandra?"

"Not now. Go away, will you?"

He went abruptly. Alice loosened my hair, bound my head with a wet towel, and poured cologne-water over me, lamenting all the while that she had not brought me home with her; and then went down for some tea, presently returning to say that Charles had been for Dr. White, who said he would not come. But he was there shortly afterwards. By night I was well again.

Dr. Price gave us a lecture on late hours that week, requesting us, if we had any interest in our education, or expected him to have any, to abstain from Balls.

Ben Somers disappeared; no one knew where he had gone. The Ryders were in consternation, for he was an inmate of the family, since he had gone into Judge Ryder's office, six weeks before. He returned, however, with a new overcoat trimmed with fur, the same as that with which my new cloak was trimmed. A great snow storm began the day of his return, and blocked us in doors for several days, and we had permanent sleighing afterwards.

In January it was proposed that we should go to the Swan Tavern, ten miles out of Rosville.

I had made good resolutions since the Ball, and declined going to the second, which came off three weeks afterwards The truth was, I did not enjoy the first; but I preferred to give my decision a virtuous tinge. I also determined to leave the Academy when the spring came, for I was no school girl. But for Helen, I could not have remained as I did. She staid for pastime now, she confessed, it was so dull at home; her father was wrapped in his studies, and she had a step-mother. I resolved again that I would study more, and was translating, in view of this resolve, "Corinne," with Miss Prior, and singing sedulously with Mrs. Lane, and had begun a course of reading with Dr. Price.

I refused two invitations to join the sleighing party, and on the night it was to be had prepared to pass the evening in my own room with Oswald and Corinne. Before the fire, with lighted candles, I heard a ringing of bells in the yard, and a stamping of feet on the piazza. Alice sent up for me. I found Ben Somers with her, who begged me to take a seat in his sleigh. Helen was there, and Amelia Bancroft. Alice applauded me for refusing him; but when he whispered in my ear, that he had been to Surrey, I changed my mind. She assisted me with cheerful alacrity to put on a merino dress—its color was purple, a color I hate now, and never wear—and wrapped me warmly. Charles appeared before we started. "Are you really going?" he asked, in a tone of displeasure.

"She is really going," Ben answered for me. "Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft are going," Helen said. "Why not drive out with Mrs. Morgeson?"

"The night is splendid," Ben remarked.

"Won't you come?" I asked.

"If Alice wishes it. Will you go?" he asked her.

"Would you?" she inquired of all, and all replied, "Yes."

We started in advance. Helen and Amelia were packed on the back seat, in a Buffalo robe, while Ben and I sat in the shelter of the driver's box, wrapped in another. It was moonlight, and as we passed the sleighs of the rest of the party, exchanging greetings, we grew very merry. Ben, voluble and airy, enlivened us by his high spirits.

We were drinking mulled wine round the long pine dinner-table of the Swan, when Charles and Alice arrived. There were about thirty in the room, which was lighted with tallow candles. When he entered, it seemed as if the candles suddenly required snuffing, and we ceased to laugh. All spoke to him with respect, but with an inflection of the voice which denoted that he was not one of us. As he carelessly passed round the table all made a movement as he approached, scraping their chairs on the bare floor, moving their glass of mulled wine, or altering the position of their arms or legs. An indescribable appreciation of the impression which he made upon others filled my heart. His isolation from the sympathy of every person there, gave me a pain and a pity, and for the first time I felt a pang of tenderness, and a throe of pride for him. But Alice, upon whom he never made any impression, saw nothing of this; her gayety soon removed the stiffness and silence his appearance had created. The party grew noisy again, except Ben, who had not broken the silence into which

he fell as soon as he saw Charles. The mulled wine stood before him untouched. I moved to the corner of the table, to allow room for the chair which Charles was turning towards me. Ben ordered more wine, and sent a glass full to him. Taking it from the boy who brought it, I gave it to him. "Drink," I said. My voice sounded strangely. Barely tasting it, he set the glass down, and leaning his arm on the table, turned his face to me, shielding it with his hand from the gaze of those about us. I pushed away a candle that flared in our faces.

"You never drink wine?"

"No."

"How was the ride down?"

"Delightful."

"What about the new horse?"

"He is an awful brute."

"When shall we have a ride with him?"

"When you please."

The boy asked us, would you please go to the parlor; our room was wanted for supper. An immediate rush, with loud laughing took place, near the parlor fire; but Charles and I did not move. I was busy re-making the bow of my purple silk cravat.

"'I drink the cup of a costly death,'" Ben hummed, as he sauntered along by us, hands in his pockets—the last in the room, except us two.

"Indeed, Somers; perhaps you would like this too." And he offered him his glass of wine.

Ben took it, and with his thumb and finger snapped it off at the stem, and tipped the wine over Charles's hand.

I saw it staining his wristband, like blood. He did not stir, but a slight smile travelled swiftly over his face.

"I know Veronica," said Ben. "Has this man seen *her?*"

I was crushed. What a barrier his expression of contempt made between her and me!

Withal I felt a humiliating sense of defeat.

Charles read me.

As he folded his wristband under his sleeve, carefully and slowly, his slender fingers did not tremble with the desire that possessed him, which I saw in his terrible eyes, asking me, "*Shall I kill him?*"

An involuntary groan burst from me.

"Somers," he said, rising, and tapping him on the shoulder; "behave like a man, and let us alone. I love this girl."

His face glowed, pale as it was; his eyes softened, and mine filled with tears.

"Cassandra," urged Ben in a gentle voice, "come with me; come away."

"Fool," I answered; "let *me* alone. Go out."

He hesitated, and then obeyed, turning at the door, and again urging, "Come."

"Go, go," stamping my foot. The door closed without a sound.

"Now Charles, we"— A horrible taste came into my mouth; I put my handkerchief to my lips, and wiped away streaks of blood. "Look at this."

"It is nothing, by God!" And he snatched the handkerchief. "Take mine." But he looked agitated, and I felt dizzy.

"We must go back," I said. That fact was an imperative one, important before all others, even if I were dying.

"Be quiet."

He opened the window softly, and took from the sill a handfull of snow, which I swallowed, and which revived me.

"Do you hear me?" I said. "Never say those frightful words again. Never,—never—never."

"Never, if it must be so."

He touched my hand; I opened it, and his closed over mine. A heavy throb went through all my frame, and I swayed towards him; but he held me from him, with his firm grasp.

"Go now," he said, and springing to the window, threw it up, and jumped out. The boy came in with a table cloth on his arm, and behind him Ben.

"Glass broken, sir."

"Put it in the bill."

He offered me his arm, which I was glad to take.

"Where is Charles?" Alice asked, when we went in

"He has just left us," Ben answered; "looking after his horses probably."

"Of course," she replied. "You look blue, Cass. Here, take my chair by the fire; we are going to dance a Virginia reel."

I accepted her offer, and was thankful that the dance would take them away. I wanted to be alone forever. Helen glided behind my chair, and laid her hand on my shoulder; I shook it off.

"What is the matter, Cass?"

"I am going away from Ros— school."

"We are all going; but not to-night."

"I am going to-night."

"So you shall, dear; but wait till after supper."

"Do you think, Helen, that I shall ever have consumption?" fumbling for my handkerchief, forgetting in whose possession it was. But Charles came in at that instant, and I remembered that he had it.

"What on earth has happened to you? Oh!" she exclaimed. I looked at her. "You were out there with Morgeson and Ben Somers," she whispered; "something has occurred; what is it?"

"You shall never know; never—never—never."

"Cassandra, that man is a devil."

"I like devils."

"The same blood rages in both of you."

"It's mulled wine,—thick and stupid."

"Pooh."

"Will there be tea, at supper?"

"You shall have some"

"Ask Ben to order it."

"Heaven forgive us all!"

"Remember the tea."

Charles stood near his wife; wherever she moved afterwards he moved. I saw it, and felt that it was the shadow of something which would follow.

At last the time came for us to return. Helen had plied me with tea, and was otherwise watchful, but scarcely spoke.

"It is an age," I said, "since I left Rosville."

She raised her eyebrows merely, and asked me if I would have more tea.

"In my room," I thought, "I shall find my self again." And as I opened my door, it welcomed me with so friendly and silent an aspect, that I betrayed my grief, and it covered my misery as with a cloak.

CHAPTER XX.

Helen was called home, by the illness of her father, and did not return to Rosville. She would write me, she said; but it was many weeks before I received a letter. Ben Somers about

this time took a fit of industry, and made a plan for what he called a well regulated life, averring that he should always abide by it. Every hour had its duty, which must be fulfilled. He weighed his bread and meat, ate so many ounces a day, and slept watch and watch, as he nautically termed it. I guessed that the meaning of his plan, was to withdraw from the self-chosen post of censor. His only alienation was an occasional disappearance for a few days. I never asked him where he went, and had never spoken to him concerning his mysterious remark about having been in Surrey. Neither had I heard anything of his being there from father. Once he told me that his father had explained the marriage of old Locke Morgeson; but that it was not clear to him that we were at all related.

In consequence of his rigorous life, I saw little of him. Though urged by Alice, he did not come to our house, and we rarely met him elsewhere. People called him eccentric; but then he was of a rich family, and could afford to be, and they were not slighted by his neglect.

There was a change everywhere. The greatest change of all was in Charles. From the night of the sleigh ride his manner towards me was totally altered. As far as I could discern, the change was a confirmed one. The days grew montonous, but my mind avenged itself by night in dreams, which renewed our old relation in all its mysterious vitality. So strong were their impressions that each morning I expected to receive some token from him which would prove that they were not lies. As my expectation grew cold and faint, the sense of a double hallucination tormented me—the past and the present.

The winter was over. I passed it like the rest of Rosville, going out when Alice went, staying at home when she staid. It was all one what I did, for I appeared contented whether at home or abroad.

Alice alone was unchanged; her spirits and pursuits were the same. Judging by herself, if she judged at all, she perceived no change in us. Her theory regarding Charles was too firm to be shaken, and all his oddity was a matter of course. As long as I ate, and drank, and slept as usual, I must be the same. He was not at home much. Business, he said, kept him at the mills, where he often slept, or out of town. But the home machinery was still under his controling hand. Not a leaf dropped in the conservatory that he did not see; not a meal was served whose slightest detail was not according to his desire. The horses were exercised, the servants managed, the

children kept within bounds; nothing in the formula of our daily life was ever dropped, and yet I scarcely ever saw him! When we met, I shared his attentions. He gave me flowers; noticed my dress; spoke of the affairs of the day; but all in so public and matter-of-fact a way, that I thought I must be the victim of a vicious sentimentality, or that he had amused himself with me. Either way, the sooner I cured myself of my vice the better. But my dreams continued.

"I miss something in your letters," father complained. "What is it? Would you like to come home? Your mother is failing in health—she may need you, though she says not."

I wrote him that I should come home.

"Are you prepared," he asked in return, "to remain at home for the future? Have you laid the foundation of anything by which you can abide contented, and employed? Veronica has been spending two months in New York, with the family of one of my business friends. All that she brings back serves to embellish her quiet life, not to change it. Will it be so with you?"

I wrote back, "No; but I am coming."

He wrote me of changes in Surrey. Dr. Snell had gone, library and all, and a new minister, red hot from Andover, had taken his place. An ugly new church was building for him. His best ship, the "Locke Morgeson," was at the bottom of the Indian Ocean, he had just heard. Her loss bothered him. His letters were kinder than ever.

I consulted with Alice about leaving the Academy. She approved my plan, but begged me not to leave her. I said nothing of my determination to that effect, feeling a strange disinclination towards owning it, though I persisted in repeating it to myself. I applied diligently to my reading, emulating Ben Somers in the regularity of my habits, and took long walks daily—a mode of exercise I had adopted since I had ceased my rides with Charles. The pale blue sky of Spring over me, and the pale green grass under me, were charming perhaps; but there was the same monotony in them, as in other things. I did not frequent our old promenade, Silver Street, but pushed my walks into the outskirts of Rosville, by farms bordered with woods. My schoolmates, who were familiar with all the pleasant spots of the neighborhood, met me in groups. "Are you really taking walks like the rest of us?" they asked. "Only alone," I answered.

I bade farewell at last to Miss Prior. We parted with all friendliness and respect; from the fact, possibly, that we

parted ignorant of each other. It was the most rational relation that I had ever held with any one. We parted without emotion or regret, and I started on my usual walk.

As I was returning I met Ben Somers. When he saw me he threw his cap into the air, with the information that he had done with his plans, and had ordered an indigestible supper, in honor of his resolve. As people had truly remarked, he could afford to be eccentric. He was tired of it; he had money enough to do without Law. "Not as much as your cousin Morgeson, who can do without the Gospel, too."

This was the first time that he had referred to Charles since that memorable night. Trifling as his words were, they broke into the foundations of my stagnant will, and set the tide flowing once more.

"You went to Surrey."

"I was there a few hours. Your father was not at home. He asked me there, you remember. I introduced myself, therefore, and was politely received by your mother, who sent for Veronica, who came in with an occupied air, her hands full of what I thought were herbs; but they were grasses, which she had been re-arranging, she said.

"'You know my sister?' she asked, coming close, and looking at me, with the most singular eyes that were ever on earth." He stopped a moment. "Not like yours, in the least," he continued. "'Cassandra is very handsome now, is she?'

"'Why, Veronica!' said your mother, 'you astonish Mr. Somers.'

"'You are not astonished,' she said with vehemence, 'you are embarrassed.'

"'Upon my soul I am,' I replied; but I felt at ease when I had said so.

"'Tell me, what has Cassandra been taught? Is Rosville suited to her? We are not.'

"'Veronica!' said your mother again.

"'Mother,' and she shook the grasses, and made a little snow fall round her; 'what shall I say then? I am sure he knows Cassandra. What did you come here for?' turning to me again.

"'To see you,' I answered foolishly.

"'And has Cassandra spoken of me?' Her pale face grew paler, and an indescribable expression passed over it. 'I do not often speak of her.'

"'She does not of you,' I was obliged to answer. And then I said I must go. But your mother made me dine with them.

When I came away Veronica offered me her hand; but she sent no message to you. She has never been out of my mind a moment since."

"You remember the particulars of the interview very well."

"Why not?"

"Would she bear your supervision?"

"Forgive me, Cassandra. Have I not been making a hermit of myself, eating bread and meat by the ounce, for an expiation?"

"How did it look there?"

"You strange girl, have you a soul then? It is a grand place, where it has not been meddled with. I hired a man to drive me as far as any paths went, into those curving horns of land, on each side of Surrey to the South. The country is crazy with barrenness, and the sea mocks it with its terrible beauty."

"You will visit us, won't you?"

"Certainly; I intend to go there."

"Do you know that I left school to-day?"

"It is time."

I hurried into the house, for I did not wish to hear any questions from him, concerning my future. Charlotte, who was rolling up an umbrella in the hall, said it was tea-time, adding that Mr. Morgeson had come, and that he was in the dining-room. I went up stairs to leave my bonnet. As I pulled off my glove the ring on my finger twisted round. I took it off, for the first time since Charles had given it to me. The sense of haste came upon me; my hands trembled. I brushed my hair with the back of the brush; shook it out, and wound it into a loose mass, thrust in my comb, and went down. Charlotte was putting candles on the tea-table. Edward was on his father's knee; Alice was waiting by the tray.

"Here—is—Cassandra," said Charles, mentioning the fact, as if he merely wished to attract the child's attention.

"Here—is—Cassandra," I repeated, imitating his tone. He started. The devil broke loose in him, and looking through his eyes an instant, disappeared, like a maniac who looks through the bars of his cell, and dodges from the eye of his keeper. Jesse brought me a letter while we were at the table. It was from Helen. I broke its seal to see how long it was, and put it aside.

"I am free, Alice. I have left the Academy, and am going to set up for an independent woman."

"What?" said Charles; "you did not tell me. Did you know it, Alice?"

"Yes; we can't expect her to be at school all her days."

"Cassandra," he said suddenly, "will you give me the salt?"

He looked for the ring, on the hand which I stretched towards him.

He not only missed that, but he observed the disregard of his wishes, in the way I had arranged my hair. I shook it looser from the comb, and pushed it from my face. An expression of unspeakable passion, pride, and anguish, came into his eyes; his mouth trembled; he caught up a glass of water to hide his face, and drank slowly from it

"Are you going away again soon?" Alice asked.

"No."

"To keep Cassandra here, I want to ask Mrs. Morgeson to come. Will you write Mr. Morgeson to urge it?"

"Yes."

"I shall ask them to give up Cass altogether to us."

"You like her so much, do you, Alice?"

His voice sounded far off, and faint.

Again I refrained from speaking my resolution of going home. I would give up thinking of it, even! I felt again the tension of the chain between us. That night I ceased to dream of him.

"My letter is from Helen, Alice."

"When did you see Somers?" Charles asked.

"To-day. I have an idea he will not remain here long."

"He is an amusing young man," Alice remarked.

"Very," said Charles.

Helen's letter was long, and full of questions. What had I done? How had I been? She gave an account of her life at home. She was her father's nurse, and seldom left him. It was a dreary sort of business; but she was not melancholy. In truth, she felt better pleased with herself than she had been in Rosville. She could not help thinking that a chronic invalid would be a good thing for me. How was Ben Somers? How much longer should I stay in Rosville? It would know us no more forever, when we left, and both of us would leave it at the same time. Would I visit her ever? They lived in a big house, with a red front door. On the left was a lane, with tall poplars dying on each side of it, up which the cows passed, every night. At the back of it was a huge barn, round which martins and pigeons flew the year through. It was dull, but respectable, and refined; and no one knew that she was tatooed on the arm.

I treasured this letter, and all she wrote me. It was my first school-girl correspondence, and my last.

Relations of Alice came from a distance, to pay her a visit. There was a father, a mother, a son about twenty-one, and two girls, who were younger. Alice told me that she wished they had staid at home ; but she was polite, and endeavored to make their visit agreeable. The son, called by his family, "Bill," informed Charles that he was a judge of horse flesh, and would like to give his nags a try, having a high-flyer himself, at home, that the old gentleman would not hear of his bringing along. His actions denoted an admiration of me. He looked over the book I was reading, or rummaged my work box, trying on my thimble with an air of tenderness, and peeping into my needle-book. He told Alice that he thought I was a whole team and a horse to let; but he felt rather balky when he came near me, I had such a smartish eye.

"What am I to do, marm ?" asked Jesse, one morning, when Charles was away. "That 'ere young man wants to ride the new horse, and it is jist the one he mus'n't ride."

"I will speak to cousin Bill myself," she said.

"He seems a sperrited young feller, and if he wants to break his neck, it's most a pity he shouldn't."

"I think," she said, when Jesse had retired, "that Charles must be saving up that beast to kill himself with. He will not pull a chaise yet."

"Has Charles tried him ?"

"In the lane, in an open wagon. He has a whim of having him broken to drive without blinders, bare of harness ; he has been away so of late that he has not accomplished it."

Bill entered while we were talking, and Alice told him he must not attempt to use the horse ; but proposed he should take her pair, and drive out with me. I shook my head in vain ; she was bent on mischief. He was mollified by the proposal, and I was obliged to get ready. On starting, he placed his cap on one side ; held his whip upright, telling me that it was not up to the mark in length, and doubled his knuckles over the reins. He was a good Jehu, but I could not induce him to observe anything along the road.

"Where's Mr. Morgeson's mills ?"

We turned in their direction.

"He is a man of property, ain't he ?"

"I think so."

"He has prime horses, anyhow. That stallion of his would

bring a first rate price, if he wanted to sell. Do you play the piano ?"

"A little."

"And sing ?"

"Yes."

"I have not heard you. Will you sing, '*A place in thy Memory, Dearest,*' sometime for me ?"

"Certainly."

"Are you fond of flowers, and the like ?"

"Very fond of them."

"So am I; our tastes agree. Here we are, hey ?"

Charles came out when he saw us coming over the bridge, and Bill pulled up the horses scientifically, giving him a coachman's salute. "You see, I am quite a whip."

"You are," said Charles. "Get out, will you ?"

"What a cub !" he whispered. "I think I'll give up my horses, and take to walking, as you have."

On the way home Bill held the reins in one hand, and attempted to take mine with the other, a proceeding which I checked; whereupon he was exceedingly confused. The whip fell from his clutch over the dasher, and in recovering it his hat fell off; his shame kept him silent for the rest of the ride.

I begged Alice to propose no more rides with cousin Bill. That night he composed a letter, which he sent me by Charlotte, early the next morning.

"Why Charlotte, what nonsense is this ?"

"I expect," she answered sympathizingly, "that it is an an offer of his hand and heart."

"Don't mention it, Charlotte."

"Never, while I have breath."

In an hour she told Phœbe, who told Alice, who told Charles, and there it ended. It was an offer, as Charlotte predicted. My first! I was crest-fallen! I wrote a reply, waited till everybody had gone down to breakfast, and slipping into his room, pinned it to the pin-cushion. In the evening, he asked if I ever sang, '*Should these fond Hopes e'er forsake thee.*' I gave him the '*Pirate's Serenade*' instead, which his mother declared beautiful. I saw Alice and Charles laughing, and could hardly help joining them, when I looked at Bill, in whose countenance relief and grief were mingled.

It was a satisfaction to us when they went away. Their visit was shortened, I suspected, by the representations Bill made to his mother. She said, "Good by," with coldness; but he shook hands with me, and said it was all right, he supposed.

The day they went I had a letter from father, which informed me that mother would not come to Rosville. He reminded me that I had been in Rosville over a year. "I am going home soon," I said to myself, putting away the letter. It was a summer-day, bright and hot. Alice, busy all day, complained of fatigue, and went to bed soon after tea. The windows were open, and the house was perfumed with odors from the garden. At twilight I went out, and walked under the elms, whose pendant boughs were motionless. I watched the stars as they came out, one by one, above the pale green ring of the horizon, and glittered in the evening sky, which darkened slowly. I was coming up the gravel walk, when I heard a step at the upper end of it, which arrested me. I recognized it, and slipped behind a tree to wait till it should pass by me; but it ceased, and I saw Charles pulling off a twig of the tree, which brushed against his face. Presently he sprang round the tree, caught me, and held me fast.

"I am glad you are here, my darling. Do you smell the roses?"

"Yes; let me go."

"Not till you tell me one thing. Why do you stay in Rosville?"

The baby gave a loud cry in Alice's chamber, which resounded through the garden.

"Go, and take care of your baby," I said roughly, "and not busy yourself with me."

He retreated.

"Cassandra," he said, with a menacing voice, "how dare you defy me? How dare you tempt me?"

I put my hand on his arm. "Charles, is love a matter of temperament?"

"Are you mad? It is life—it is heaven—it is hell."

"There is something in this soft, beautiful, odorous night that makes me mad. But I shall not say to you, what you once said to me."

"Ah! you do not forget those words—'*I love you.*'"

Some one came down the lane, which ran behind the garden, whistling an opera air.

"There is your Providence," he said quietly, resting his hand against the tree.

I ran round to the front piazza, just as Ben Somers turned out of the lane, and called him.

"I have wandered all over Rosville since sunset," he said,

"and at last struck upon that lane. To whom does it belong?"

"It is ours, and the horses are exercised there."

"'In such a night,
Trolius, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
And sighed his soul towards the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.'"

"'In such a night,
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea banks, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage.'"

"Talk to me about Surrey."

"Not a word."

"Why did you call me?"

"To see what mood you were in.'

"How disagreeable you are! What is the use of venturing one's mood with you?"

CHAPTER XXI.

Alice called me to her chamber window one morning. "Look into the lane. Charles and Jesse are there with that brute. He goes very well, now that they have thrown the top of the chaise back; he quivered like a jelly at first."

"I must have a ride."

"Charles," she called. "Breakfast is waiting."

"What shall be his name, girls?" he asked.

"Aspen," I replied.

"That will do," said Alice.

"Shall we ride soon?" I asked.

"Will you?" he spoke quickly. "In a day or two then."

"Know what you undertake, Cass," said Alice.

"She always does," he answered.

"Let me go, papa," begged Edward.

"By and by, my boy."

"What a compliment, Cass! He does not object to venture you."

He proposed to go to Fairtown, six miles from Rosville; he had business there. The morning we were to go proved cloudy, and we waited till afternoon, when Charles declaring that it would not rain, ordered Aspen to be harnessed. I went into Alice's room tying my bonnet; he was there, leaning over the

baby's crib, who lay in it crowing and laughing at the snapping of his fingers. Alice was hemming white muslin.

"Take a shawl with you, Cass; I think it will rain, the air is so heavy."

"I guess not," said Charles, going to the window. "What a nuisance that lane is, so near the garden! I'll have it ploughed soon, and enclosed."

"For all those wild primroses, you value so?" she asked.

"I'll spare those."

Charlotte came to tell us that the chaise was ready.

"Good-bye, Alice," he said, passing her, and giving her work a toss up to the ceiling.

"Be careful."

"Take care, Sir," said Penn, after we were in the chaise, "and don't give way to him; if you do, he'll punish you. May be he feels the thunder in the air."

We reached Fairtown without any indication of mischief from Aspen, although he trotted along as if under protest. Charles was delighted, and thought he would be very fast, by the time he was trained. It grew murky and hot every moment, and when we reached Fairtown, black and sultry with the coming storm. Charles left me at the little hotel, and did not return till late in the afternoon. We decided not to wait till the rain was over. Two men led Aspen to the door. He pulled at his bridle, and attempted to run backwards, playing his old trick of trying to turn his nostrils inside out, and drawing back his upper lip.

"Something irritates him, Charles."

"If you are afraid, you must not come with me. I'll have you sent home in a carriage from the tavern."

"I shall go back with you."

But I felt a vague alarm, and begged him to watch Aspen, and not talk. Aspen went faster and faster, seeming to have lost his shyness, and my fears subsided. We were within a couple of miles of Rosville, when a splashing rain fell.

"You must not be wet," said Charles. "I will put up the top. Aspen is so steady now, it may not scare him."

"No, no," I said; but he had it up already, and asked me to snap the spring on my side. I had scarcely taken my arm inside the chaise when Aspen stopped, turned his head, and looked at us with glazed eyes; flakes of foam flew from his mouth over his mane. The flesh on his back contracted, and quivered. I thought he was frightened by the chaise-top, and looked at Charles in terror.

"He has some disorder," he cried. "Oh, Cassandra! My God!"

He tried to spring at his head, but was too late, for the horse was leaping madly. He fell back on the seat.

"If he will keep the road," he muttered.

I could not move my eyes from him. How pale he was! But he did not speak again. The horse ran a few rods, leaped across a ditch, clambered up a stone wall with his fore-feet, and fell backwards!

Dr. White was in my room, washing my face. There was a smell of camphor about the bed. "You crawled out of a small hole, my child," he said, as I opened my eyes. It was quite dark, but I saw people at the door, and two or three at the foot of my bed, and I heard low constrained talking everywhere.

"His iron feet made a dreadful noise on the stones, Doctor!"

I shut my eyes again, and dozed. Suddenly a great tumult came to my heart.

"Was he killed?" I cried, and tried to rise from the bed. "Let me go, will you?"

"He is dead, and damned," whispered Dr. White; "as he should have been before."

I laughed loudly. "Damned, is he? What am I?"

"Be a good girl—be a good girl. Get out, all of you. Here, Miss Prior."

"You are crying, Doctor: my eyes feel dry."

"Pooh, pooh, little one. Now I am going to set your arm; simple fracture, that's all. The blow was tempered, but you are paralyzed by the shock."

"Miss Prior, is my face cut?"

"Not badly, my dear."

My arm was set, my face bandaged, some opium administered, and then I was left alone with Miss Prior. I grew drowsy, but suffered so from the illusion that I was falling out of bed, that I could not sleep.

It was near morning when I shook off my drowsiness, and looked about; Miss Prior was nodding in an arm-chair. I asked for drink, and when she gave it to me, begged her to lie down on the sofa; she did not need urging, and was soon asleep.

"What room is he in?" I thought. "I must know where he is."

I sat up in the bed, and pushed myself out by degrees, keeping my eyes on Miss Prior; but she did not stir. I staggered when I got into the passage, but the cool air from some open window revived me, and I crept on, stopping at Alice's door to listen. I heard a child murmur in its sleep. He could not be there. The doors of all the chambers were locked, and I must go down stairs. I went into the garden-room—the door was open, the scent of the roses came in and made me deadly sick; into the dining room, and into the parlor—he was there, lying on a table covered with a sheet. Alice sat on the floor, her face hid in her hands, crying softly. I touched her. She started on seeing me. "Go away, Cassy, for God's sake. How came you out of bed?"

"Hush! Tell me!" And I went down on the floor beside her. "Was he dead when they found us?"

She nodded.

"What was said? Did you hear?"

"They said he must have made a violent effort to save you. The side of the chaise was torn. The horse kicked him after you were thrust out, over the wheel. Or did you creep out?"

I groaned. "Why did he thrust me out?"

"What?"

"Where is Aspen?"

She pointed to the stable. "He had a fit. Penn says he has had one before; but he thought him cured. He stood quiet in the ditch, after he had broken from the chaise."

"Alice, did you love him?"

"My husband!"

A door near us opened, and Ben Somers and young Parker looked in. They were the watchers. Parker went back when he saw me; but Ben came in. He knelt down by me; put his arm round me, and said, "Poor girl!" Alice raised her tear-stained face, looking at me curiously, when he said this. She took hold of my streaming hair, and pulled my head round. "Did *you* love him?" Ben rose quickly, and went to the window.

"Alice," I whispered, "you may, or you may not forgive me, but I was strangely bound to him. And I must tell you, that I hunger now for the kiss he never gave me."

"I see. Enough. Go back to your room. I must stay by by him, till all is over."

"I can't go back. Ben!"

What is it?"

Take me up stairs."

Taking me in his arms, he whispered · "Leave him forever body and soul. He was a bad man; I am glad he is dead."

"Chut; drop the commonplace, for once, Ben."

He put me back in bed, without hurting my arm, arranged my hair, and the pillow, and gave me drink, without the least noise. My shoes and stockings had been pulled off, and the skirt of my dress cut off. I asked him to find them. The skirt had been torn zig-zag by some delaying obstacle. "That will do. It was Charles who broke my arm." He made no reply, but stooped down and kissed me tenderly, and went out All this time Miss Prior had slept the sleep of the just; but he had barely gone when she started up, and said, "Did you call, my dear?"

"No, it is day."

"So it is; but you must sleep more."

I could not obey, and kept awake so long, that Dr. White said he himself should go crazy unless I slept.

"I am going to sleep presently," I reiterated; "and I am going home."

At last my mind went astray; it journeyed into a dismal world, and came back without an account of its adventures. While it was gone, my friends were summoned to witness a contest, where the odds were in favor of Death. But I recovered. Whether it was youth, a good constitution, or the skill of Dr. White, no one could decide. It was a faint, feeble, fluttering return at first. The faces round me, mobile with life, wearied me. I was indifferent to existence, and was more than once in danger of lapsing into the void I had escaped.

When I first tottered down stairs, he had been buried more than three weeks. It was a bright morning; the windows of the parlor, where Charlotte led me, were open. Little Edward was playing round the table upon which I had seen his father stretched, dead. I measured it with my eye, remembering how tall he looked. I would have retreated, when I saw that Alice had visitors, but it was too late. They rose, and offered congratulations. I was angry that there was no change in the house. The rooms should have been dismantled, reflecting disorder and death, by their perpetual darkness and disorder. It was not so. No dust had been allowed to gather on the furniture; no wrinkles or stains. No mist on the mirrors; no dimness anywhere. Alice was elegantly dressed, in the deepest mourning. I examined her with a cynical eye; her bombazine was trimmed with crape, and the edge of her collar was beautifully crimped. A mourning brooch fastened it, and she

wore jet ear-rings. She looked handsome, composed, and contented, holding a black-edged handkerchief. Charlotte had placed my chair opposite a glass; I caught sight of my elongated visage in it. How dull I looked! My hair was faded and rough; my eyes were a pale, lustreless blue. The visitors departed while I still contemplated my rueful aspect, and Alice and I were alone.

"I want some broth, Alice. I am hungry."

"How many bowls have you had this morning?"

"Only two."

"You must wait an hour for the third; it is not twelve o'clock."

We were silent. The flies buzzed in and out of the windows; a great bee flew in, tumbled against the panes, loudly hummed, and after a while got out again. Alice yawned, and I pulled the threads out of the border of my handkerchief.

"The hour is up; I will get your broth."

"Bring me a great deal."

She came back with a thin, impoverished liquid.

"There is no chicken in it," I said tearfully.

"I took it out."

"How could you?" And I wept.

She smiled. "You are very weak. You shall have a bit." And she went out, returning with an infinitesimal portion of chicken.

"What a young creature it must have been!"

She laughed now, and promised me more.

"Now you must lie down. Take my arm, and come to the sofa."

"Let us go into another room."

"Come, then."

"Don't leave me," I begged, after she had arranged me comfortably. She sat down by me with a fan.

"What happened while I was sick?"

She fanned rapidly for an instant, taking thought what to say.

"I shot Aspen, a few days after."

"With your own hand?"

"Yes."

"Good."

"Penn protested, and said I interfered with Providence. Jesse added, also, that what had happened was ordained, and no mistake. I sent them both away."

"And I am going at last, Alice; father will be here again in a few days."

"You did not recognize Veronica."

"Was she here?"

"She came, and went the same day. What great tears rolled down her unmovable face, when she stood by your bed! She could not stay; the atmosphere distressed her, and she went back to Boston, to wait for your father. I could neither prevail on her to eat, drink, or rest."

"What will you do, Alice?"

"Take care of the children, and manage the mills."

"Manage the mills?"

"I can. No wonder you look astonished," she said with a sigh. "I am changed. When perhaps I should feel that I have done with life, I am eager to begin it. I have lamented over myself lately."

"How is Ben?"

"He has been here often. How strange it was, that to him alone Veronica gave her hand, when they met! Indeed, she gave him both her hands."

"And he?"

"Took them, bowing over them, 'till I thought he wasn't coming up again. I do not call people eccentric any more," she said, faintly blushing. "I look for a reason in every action. Tell me fairly, have you had a contempt for me—for my want of perception? I understand you now, to the bone and marrow, I assure you."

"Then you understand more than I do. But will you remember, that once or twice I attempted to express my doubts to you?"

"Yes, yes, with a candor which misled me. But you are talking too much."

"Give me more broth, then."

CHAPTER XXII.

I was soon well enough to go home. Father came for me, bringing aunt Merce. There was no alteration in her, except that she had taken to wearing a false front, which had a claret tinge when the light struck it, and a black lace cap. She walked the room in speechless distress when she saw me, and

could not refrain from taking an immense pinch of snuff in my presence.

"Didn't you bring any flag-root, aunt Merce?"

"Oh Lord, Cassandra, won't anything upon earth change you?"

And then we both laughed, and felt comfortable together. Her knitting mania had given way to one she called transferring. She brought a little basket filled with rags, worn out embroideries, collars, cuffs, and edges of handkerchiefs, from which she cut the needle-work, to sew again on new muslin. She looked at embroidery with an eye merely to its capacity for being transferred. Alice proved a treasure to her, by giving her heaps of fine work. She and aunt Merce were pleased with each other, and when we were ready to come away, Alice begged her to visit her every year. I made no farewell visits—my ill-health was sufficient excuse; but my schoolmates came to bid me good bye, and brought me presents of needle-books, and pin-cushions, which I returned by giving away yards of ribbon, silver fruit-knives, and Mrs. Hemans' poems, which poetess had lately given my imagination an apostrophizing direction. Miss Prior came also, with a copy of "Young's Night Thoughts," bound in speckled leather. This hilarious and refreshing poem remained at the bottom of my trunk, till Temperance fished it out, to read on Sundays, in her own room, where she usually passed her hours of solitude in hemming dish towels, or marking articles called "Takers." Dr. Price came, too, and even the haughty four Ryders. Alice was gratified with my popularity. But I felt cold at heart, doubtful of myself, drifting to nothingness in thought and purpose. None saw my doubts, or felt my coldness.

I shook hands with all, exchanged hopes and wishes, and repeated the last words which people say on departure. Alice and I neither kissed, nor shook hands. There was that between us which kept us apart. A hard, stern face was still in our recollection. We remembered a certain figure, whose steps had ceased about the house, whose voice was hushed, but who was potent yet.

"We shall not forget each other," she said.

And so I took my way out of Rosville. Ben Somers went with us to Boston, and staid at The Bromfield with us. In the morning he disappeared, and when he returned had an emerald ring, which he begged me to wear, and tried to put it on the finger, where he had seen the diamond. I put it back in

its box, thanking him, and saying it must be stored with the farewell needle-books and pin-cushions.

"Shall we have a little talk?"

Aunt Merce slipped out, with an affectation of not having heard him. We laughed, and Ben was glad that I could laugh.

"How do you feel?"

"Rather weak still."

"I do not mean so, but in your mind; how are you?"

"I have no mind."

"Must I give it up?"

"Yes, do. You'll visit Alice? You know her intentions. She is a good woman."

"She will be, when she knows how."

"What o'clock is it?"

"Incorrigible! Near ten."

"Here is father. We must start."

The carriage was ready; where was aunt Merce?

"Locke," she said, when she came, "I have got a bottle of port for Cassandra, some essence of peppermint, and sandwiches; do you think that will do?"

"We can purchase supplies along the road, if yours give out. Come, we are ready. Mr. Somers, we shall see you at Surrey? Take care, Cassy. Now we are off."

"I shall leave Rosville," were Ben's last words.

"What a fine, handsome young man he is! He is a gentleman," said aunt Merce

"Of course, aunt Merce."

"Why of course? I should think from the way you speak, that you had only seen young gentlemen of his stamp. Have you forgotten Surrey?"

Father and she laughed. They could laugh very easy, for they were overjoyed to have me going home with them. Mother would be glad, they said. I felt it, though I did not say so.

How soundly I slept that night at the inn on the road! A little after sunset, on the third day, for we travelled slowly, we reached the woods which bordered Surrey, and soon came in sight of the sea encircling it like the crescent moon. It was as if I saw the sea for the first time. A vague sense of its power surprised me; it seemed the expression of my melancholy. As we approached the house, the orchard, and I saw Veronica's window, other feelings moved me. Not because I saw familiar objects, nor because I was going home—it was the relation in which *I* stood to them, that I felt. We drove through the gate, and a handsome little boy was astride a win-

dow sill, with two pipes in his mouth. "Papa!" he shrieked, threw his pipes down, and dropped on the ground, to run after us.

"Hasn't Arthur grown?" aunt Merce asked. "He is most seven."

"Most seven? Where are all the years gone?"

I looked about me. I had been away so long, the house looked diminished. Mother was in the door, crying so when she put her arms round me, that she could not speak. I know there should have been no higher beatitude than to live in the presence of an unselfish, unasking, vital love. I only said, "Oh mother, how gray you are! Are you glad to see me? I have grown old too!"

We went in by the kitchen, where the men were, and a young girl with a bulging forehead. Hepsey looked out from the buttery door, and put her apron to her eyes, without making any demonstration of welcome Temperance was mixing dough. She made an effort to giggle, but failed; and as she could not cover her face with her doughy hands, was obliged to let the tears run their natural course. Recovering herself in a moment, she exclaimed:

"Heavenly Powers, how you're altered! I shouldn't have known you. Your hair and skin are as dry as chips; they didn't wash you with Castile soap, I'll bet."

"How you do talk, Temperance," Hepsey said.

The girl with the bulging forehead laughed a shrill laugh.

"Why, Fanny!" said mother.

The hall door opened. Here *she* is," muttered Fanny.

"Veronica!"

"Cassandra!"

We grasped hands, and stared mutely at each other. I felt a contraction in the region of my heart, as if a cord of steel were binding it. And she, at least, was glad that I was alive!

"They look something alike now," Hepsey remarked.

"Not at all," said Veronica, dropping my hand, and retreating.

"Why, Arthur!"

He clambered into my lap.

"Were you killed, my dear sister?"

"Not quite, little boy."

"Well; do you know that I am a veteran officer, and smoke my pipe, lots?"

"You must rest, Cassy," said mother. "Don't go up stairs, though, till you have had your supper. Hurry it up, Temperance."

"It will be on the table in less than no time, Mis Morgeson," she answered, "provided Miss Fanny is agreeable about taking in the tea-pot."

I had a comfortable sense of property, when I took possession of my own room. It was better, after all, to live with a father and mother, who would adopt my ideas. Even the sea might be mine. I asked father the next morning, when we were at breakfast, how far out his property extended.

"I hope you will like home," said mother. "I am going to give up pouring tea and coffee; you must do it. I had rather sit next Locke."

"You and aunt Merce have settled down into a venerable condition. You wear caps, too! What a stage forward!"

"The cap is not ugly, like aunt Merce's; I made it," Veronica said, sipping from a great glass.

"Gothic pattern, isn't it?" father asked; "with a tower, and a bridge at the back of the neck?"

"The hash is Fanny's work, mother," said Verry.

"So I perceive."

"Hepsey is not at the table," I said.

"It is her idea not to come, since I had taken Fanny. Did you notice Fanny? She prefers to have her wait on her."

"Who is Fanny?"

"Her father is old Ichabod Bowles, who lives on the Neck. Last winter her mother sent for me, and begged me to take her. I could not refuse, for she was dying of consumption; so I promised. The poor woman died, in the bitterest weather, and a few days after, Ichabod brought Fanny here, and told me he had done with woman-kind forever. Fanny was sulky and silent for a long time. I thought she never would get warm. If obliged to leave the fire, she sat against the wall, with her face hid in her arms. Veronica has made some impression on her; but she is not a good girl."

"She will be, mother. I am better than I was."

"Never; her disposition is hateful. She is angry with those who are better off than herself. I have not seen a spark of gratitude in her."

"I never thought of gratitude," said Verry, "it is true; but why must people be grateful?"

"We might expect little from Fanny, perhaps; she saw her mother die in want, her father stern, almost cruel to them, because he was soured by poverty. Fanny never had what she liked to eat, or wear, till she came here, or ever saw anything that pleased her; and the contrast makes her bittter."

"She is proud, too," said aunt Merce. "I hear her boasting of what she would have had, if she had staid at home."

"She is a child, you know," said Verry.

"A year younger than you are."

"Where is the boy?"

"Abolished," father answered. "Arthur is growing into that estate."

"Papa, don't forget that I am a veteran officer."

"Here, you rascal, come and get this nice egg."

He slipped down, and went round to his father, who took him on his knee.

"What shall I do? The garden, orchard, village, or what?" I asked.

"Gardens?" said Verry. "Have they been a part of your education?"

"I like flowers."

"Have you seen my plants?" aunt Merce inquired.

"I will look at them. How different is this from Rosville."

A pang cut me to the soul. The past whirled up, and disappeared, leaving me stunned and helpless. Veronica's eye was upon me. I forced myself to observe her. The difference between us was plainer than ever. I was in my twentieth year, and she was barely sixteen; handsome, but as peculiar looking as when a child. Her straight hair was a vivid chestnut color. Her eyes were near together, but large; and, as Ben Somers said, they were the most singular eyes that were ever upon earth They tormented me. There was nothing wilful in them; on the contrary, when she was wilful, she had no power over them; the strange cast was then perceptible. Neither were they imperious, nor magnetic; they were *baffling*. She pushed her chair from the table, and stood quiet, opposite me. Tall and slender, she stooped slightly, as if she were not strong enough to stand upright. Her dress was a buff-colored cambric, trimmed with knots of ribbon of the same color, dotted with green crosses. It harmonized with her colorless, fixedly pale complexion. I counted the bows of ribbon on her dress, and would have counted the crosses, if she had not interrupted me with, "What do you think of me?"

"Do you ever blush, Verry?"

"I grow paler, you know, when I blush."

"What do you think of me?"

"As wide-eyed as ever, and your eyebrows as black. Who

ever saw light, ripply hair with such eye-brows ? I see wrinkles, too."

"Where ?"

"Round your eyes, like an opening umbrella."

We dispersed, as our talk ended, in the old fashion. I followed aunt Merce to the flower-stand, which stood in its old place on the landing.

"I have a poor lot of roses," she said, "but some splendid cactuses."

"I do not love roses."

"Is it possible ? But Verry does not care so much for them, either. Lilies are her favorites ; she has a variety. Look at this Arab lily ; it is like a tongue of fire."

"Where does she keep her flowers ?"

"In wire baskets, in her room. But I must go, and make Arthur some gingerbread. He likes mine the best, and I like to please him."

"I dare say you spoil him."

"Just as you were spoiled."

"Not in Barmouth, aunt Merce."

"No, not in Barmouth."

I went from room to room, seeing little to interest me. My zeal oozed away for exploration, and when I entered my chamber, I could have said, "This spot is the summary of my wants, for it contains me." I must be my own society, and as my society was not agreeable, the more circumscribed it was, the better I could endure it. What a dreary prospect ! The past was vital, the present was dead. Life in Surrey must be dull. How could I forget, or enjoy ? I put the curtains down, and told Temperance, who was wandering about, not to call me to dinner. I determined, if possible, to surpass my dullness by indulgence. But underneath it all, I could not deny that there was a spectre, whose aimless movements kept me from stagnating. I determined to drag it up, and face it.

"Come, then, and sit beside me, and we will reason together."

It uncovered, and said, "Do you feel remorse, or repentance ?"

"Neither."

"Why do you suffer ?"

"I do not know."

"You know that you are ignorant. Do you know that you are sensual, selfish, devilish ?"

"Are you my devil ?"

No answer.

"Am I cowardly, or a liar?"

It laughed, a faint, sarcastic laugh.

"At all events," I continued, "are not my actions better than my thoughts?"

"Which makes the sinner, and which the saint?"

"Can I decide?"

"Why not?"

"My teachers and myself are so far apart! I have found a counterpart; but, spectre, you were born of the union."

My head was buried in my arms; but I heard a voice at my elbow—a shrill, scornful voice it was. "Are you coming down to tea, then?"

Looking up, I saw Fanny. "Tea-time so soon?"

"Yes, it is. You think nothing of time; have nothing to do, I suppose."

And she clasped her hands over her apron—hands so small and thin, that they looked like those of an old woman. Her hair was light and scanty, her complexion sallow, and her eyes a palish gray; but her features were delicate, and pretty. She seemed to understand my thoughts.

"You think I am stunted, don't you?"

"You are not large to my eye."

"Suppose you had been fed mostly on Indian meal, with a herring, or a piece of salted pork for a relish,and clams or tautog for a luxury, as I have been, would you be as tall, and as grand-looking as you are now? And would you be covering up your face, making believe worry?"

"May be not. You may tell mother that I am coming."

"I shall not say 'Miss Morgeson,' but 'Cassandra.' 'Cassandra Morgeson,' if I like."

"Call me what you please, only tone down that voice of yours; it is sharper than the east wind."

I heard her beating a tatoo on Veronica's door next. She had been taught to be ceremonious with her, at least. No reply was made, and she came to my door again. "I expect Miss Veronica has gone to see poor folks; it is a way *she* has," and spitefully closed it.

After tea mother came up to inquire the reason of my seclusion. My excuse of fatigue she readily accepted, for she thought I still looked ill. I had changed so much, she said, it made her heart ache to look at me. When I could speak of the accident at Rosville, would I tell her all? And would I describe my life there; what friends I had made; and would

they visit me? She hoped so. And that Mr. Somers, who made them so hurried a visit, would he come? She liked him. While she talked, she kept a pitying, but resolute eye upon me.

"Dear mother, I never can tell you all, as you wish. It is hard enough for me to bear my thoughts, without the additional one, that my feelings are understood, and speculated upon. If I should tell you, the barrier between me and self-control would give way. You will see Alice Morgeson, and if she chooses, she can tell you what my life was in her house. She knows it well."

"Cassandra, what does your bitter face mean?"

She grew pale.

"I mean, mother, all that your woman's heart might guess, if you were not so pure, so single-hearted."

"No, no, no."

"Yes."

"Then I understand the riddle you have been. I'll curse you—and who else?" she asked with violence.

"There is no one to curse, mother; these things are not as they are written in books. We may be righteous by rule, but we do not sin that way. There was no beginning, no end to mine."

"Then I'll curse myself, for giving birth to daughters"

"Wait, mother; what is bad this year, may be good the next. You blame yourself, because you believe your ignorance has brought me into danger. Wait, mother."

"You are beyond me; everything is beyond me."

"I will be a good girl. Kiss me, mother. I have been unworthy of you. When have I ever done anything for you? If you hadn't been my mother, I dare say we might have helped each other. My friendship and sympathy might have sustained you. As it is, I have behaved just as all young animals behave to their mothers. One thing you may be sure of. The doubt you feel is needless. You must neither pray, nor weep over me. Have I agitated you?"

"My heart *will* flutter too much, anyway. Oh Cassy, Cassy why are you such a girl? Why will you be so awfully head strong?" But she hugged and kissed me. As I felt the irregular beating of her heart, a pain smote me. What if she should not live long? Was I not a wicked fool to lacerate myself with an intangible trouble—the reflex of selfish emotions? The thought of a wholesome grief restored me.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Veronica's room was like no other place. I was in a new atmosphere there. A green carpet covered the floor, and the windows had light blue silk curtains.

"Green and blue together, Veronica?"

"Why not? The sky is blue, and the carpet of the earth is green."

"If you intend to represent the heavens and the earth here, it is very well."

The paper on the wall was ash-colored, smooth and shining. She had cloudy days, probably. A large-eyed Saint Cecilia, with white roses in her hair, was pasted on the wall. This frameless picture had a curious effect. Veronica, in some mysterious way, had contrived to dispose of the white margin of the picture, and the Saint looked out from the soft ashy tint of the wall paper. Opposite was an exquisite engraving, which was framed round with strips of dark red velvet. At the end of an avenue of old trees, gnarled and twisted into each other, a man stood. One hand grasped the stalk of a ragged vine, which ran over the tree near him; the other hung helpless by his side, as if the wrist were broken. His eyes were fixed on some object behind the trees, where nothing was visible but a portion of the wall of a house. His expression of concentrated fury—his attitude of waiting—testified that he would surely accomplish his intention.

"What a picture!"

"The foliage attracted me, and I bought it; but when I unpacked it, the man seemed to come out for the first time. Will you take it?"

"No; I mean to give my room a somnolent aspect. The man is too terribly sleepless."

A table stood near a window, methodically covered with labelled blank books, a morocco portfolio, and a wedgewook inkstand and vase. In an arch, which she had manufactured from the space under the garret stairs, stood her bed. At its foot, against the wall, a bunch of crimson, autumnal leaves was fastened, and a bough, black and bare, with an empty nest on it.

"Where is the feminine portion of your furnishings?"

"Look in the closet."

I opened a door. What had formerly been appropriated by mother to blankets and comfortables, she had turned into a magazine of toilet articles. There were drawers and boxes for everything which pertained to a wardrobe, arranged with beautiful skill and neatness. She directed my attention to her books, on hanging shelves, within reach of the bed. Beneath them was a small stand, with a wax candle in a silver candlestick.

"You read o'nights?"

"Yes; and the wax candle is my pet weakness."

"Have you put away Gray, and Pope, and Thompson?"

"The Arabian Nights and the Bible are still there."

"I must go back to the common-place."

"Mother said she thought you would like to re-furnish your room. It is the same as when we moved, you know."

"Did she? I will have it done. Good bye."

"Good bye."

She was at the window now, and had opened a pane.

"What's that you are doing?"

"Looking through my wicket."

I went back again to understand the wicket. It had been made, she said, so that she might have fresh air in all weathers, without raising the windows. In the night she could look out without danger of taking cold. We looked over the autumnal fields; the crows were flying seaward over the stubble, or settling in the branches of an old fir, standing alone, midway between the woods and the orchard. The ground before us, rising so gradually, and shortening the horizon, reminded me of my childish notion, that we were near the North Pole, and that if we could get behind the low rim of sky, we should be in the Arctic Zone.

"The Northern Lights have not deserted us, Veronica?"

"No; they beckon me over there, in winter."

"Do you never tire of this limited, monotonous view—of a few, uneven fields, squared by grim stone walls?"

"That is not all. See those eternal travellers, the clouds, that hurry up from some mysterious region to go over your way, where I never look. If the landscape were wider, I could never learn it. And the orchard—have you noticed that? There are bird and butterfly lives in it, every year. Why, morning and night are wonderful from these windows. But I must say the charm vanishes, if I go away. Surrey is not

lovely." She closed the wicket, and sat down by the table. My dullness vanished with her. There might be something to interest me, beneath the calm surface of our family life.

"Veronica, do you think mother is changed? I think so."

"She is always the same to me. I have had fears respecting her health."

Outside the door I met Temperance, with a clothes' basket.

"Oh ho," she said, "you are going the rounds. Verry's room beats all possessed, don't it? It is cleaned spick and span every three months. She calls it inaugurating the seasons. She is as queer as Dick's hatband. Have you any fine things to do up?"

Her question put me in mind of my trunks, and I hastened to them, with the determination of putting my room to rights. The call to dinner interrupted me before I had begun, and the call to supper came before anything in the way of improvement had been accomplished. My mind was chaotic by bed time. The picture of Veronica, reading by her wax candle, or looking through the wicket, collected and happy in her orderly perfection, came into my mind, and with it an admiration which never ceased, though I had no sympathy with her. We were as far apart as when we were children.

I was eager to employ myself, promising to perform many tasks, but the attempt killed my purpose and interest. My will was nerveless, when I contemplated Time, which stretched before me—a vague, limitless sea; and I only kept Endeavor in view, near enough to be tormented.

One day father asked me to go to Milford with him, and I then asked him for money to spend for the adornment of my room.

"Be prudent," he replied. "I am not so rich as people think me. Although the 'Locke Mergeson' was insured, she was a loss. But you need not speak of this to your mother. I never worry her with my business cares. As for Veronica, she has not the least idea of the value of money, or care for what it represents."

When we went into the shops, I found him disposed to be more extravagant than I was. I bought a blue and white carpet; a piece of blue and white flowered chintz; two stuffed chairs, covered with hair-cloth, (father remonstrated against these,) and a long mirror to go between the windows, astonishing him with my vanity. What I wanted besides, I could construct myself, with the help of the cabinet maker in Surrey.

In one of the shops I heard a familiar voice, which gave me

a thrill of anger. I turned and saw Charlotte Alden, of Barmouth, the girl who had given me the fall on the tilt. She could not control an expression of surprise, at the sight of the well-dressed woman before her. It was my dress that astonished her. Where could *I* have obtained style ?

"Miss Alden, how do you do ? Pray tell me, whether you have collected any correct legends respecting my mother's early history. And do you tilt off little girls, now-a-days ?"

She made no reply, and I left her standing where she was when I began speaking. When we got out of town, my anger cooled, and I grew ashamed of my spitefulness, and by way of penance, I related the affair to father. He laughed at what I said to her, and told me that he had long known her family. Charlotte's uncle had paid his addresses to mother. There might have been an engagement ; whether there was or not, the influence of his family had broken the acquaintance. This explained what Charlotte said to me in Miss Black's school, about mother being in love.

"You might have been angry with the girl, but you should not have felt hurt at the fact implied. Are you so young still, as to believe that only those who love marry ? Or that those who marry have never loved, except each other ?"

"I have thought of these things ; but I am afraid that Love, like Theology, if examined, makes one skeptical."

We jogged along in silence for a mile or two.

"Whether every man's children overpower him, I wonder ? I am positively afraid of you and Veronica."

"What do you mean ?"

"I am always unprepared for the demonstrations of character you and she make. My traditional estimate, which comes from thoughtlessness, or the putting off of responsibility, or God knows what, I find will not answer. I have been on my guard against that which every-day life might present—a lie, a theft, or a meanness ; but of the under current, which really bears you on, I have known nothing."

"If you happen to dive below the surface, and find the roots of our actions which are fixed beneath its tide—what then ? Must you lament over us ?"

"No, no ; but this is vague talk."

Was he dissatisfied with me ? What could he expect ? We all went our separate ways, it is true ; was it that ? Perhaps he felt alone. I studied his face ; it was not so cheerful as I remembered it once, but still open, honest, and wholesome. I promised myself to observe his tastes, and consult them. It

might be that his self-love had never been encouraged. But I failed in that design, as in all others.

"Much of my time must be consumed in passing between Milford and Surrey, you perceive."

"I will go with you often."

According to our habit, on arriving, I went into the kitchen. It was dusk there, and still. Temperance was by the fire, attending to something which was cooking.

"What is there for supper, Temperance? I am hungry."

"I s'pose you are," she answered crossly. "You'll see when it's on the table."

She took a coal of fire with the tongs, and blew it fiercely, to light a lamp by. When it was alight, she set it on the chimney shelf, revealing thereby a man at the back of the room, balancing his chair on two legs against the wall; his feet were on its highest round, and he twirled his thumbs.

"Hum," he said, when he saw me observing him; "this is the oldest darter, is it?"

"Yes," Temperance bawled.

"She is a good solid gal; but I can't recollect her christened name."

"It is Cassandra."

"Why, 'taint Scriptur'."

"Why don't you go and take off your things?" Temperance asked me.

"I'll leave them here; the fire is agreeable."

"There is a better fire in the keeping room."

"How are you, Mr. Handy?" father inquired, as he came in.

"I should be well, if my grinders didn't trouble me: they play the mischief o'nights. Have you heard from the 'Adamant,' Mr. Morgeson? I should like to get my poor boy's chist. The Lord ha' mercy on him, whose bones are whitening in the caverns of the deep."

"Now, Abram, do shut up. Tea is ready, Mr. Morgeson. I'll bring in the ham directly," said Temperance.

There was no news from the Adamant. I lingered in the hope of discovering why Mr. Handy irritated Temperance. He was a man of sixty, with a round head, and a large, tender wart on one cheek; the two tusks under his upper lip, suggested a walrus. Though he was no beauty, he looked thoroughly respectable, in garments whose primal colors had disappeared, and blue woollen stockings gartered to a miracle of tightness.

"My quinces have done fust rate this year. I haint pulled 'em yet; but I've counted them over and over agin. But my pig won't weigh nothin' like what I calkerlated on. Sarved me right. I needn't have bought him out of a drove; if Charity had been alive, I shouldn't ha' done it. A man can't—I say, Tempy—a man *can't* git along while here below, without a woman."

She gave my arm a severe pinch as she passed with the ham, and I thought it best to follow her. Mother looked at her with a smile, and said: "Deal gently with brother Abram, Temperance."

"Brother be fiddlesticked!" she said tartly. "Mis Morgeson, *do* you want some quinces?"

"Certainly."

"We'll make hard marmalade this year, then. You shall have the quinces to-morrow." And she retired with a softened face. I was told that Abram Handy was a widower anxious to take Temperance for a second helpmeet, and that she could not decide whether to accept or refuse him. She had confessed to mother that she was on the fence, and didn't know which way to jump. He was a poor witless thing, she knew; but he was as good a man as ever breathed, and stood as good a chance of being saved, as the wisest church member that ever lived! Mother thought her inclined to be mistress of an establishment over which she might have sole control. Abram owned a house, a garden, and kept pigs, hens, and a cow—these were his themes of conversation. Mother could not help thinking he was influenced by Temperance's fortune. She was worth two thousand dollars, at least. The care of her wood lot, the cutting, selling, or burning the wood on it, would be a supreme happiness to Abram, who loved property next to the kingdom of heaven. The tragedy of the old man's life was the loss of his only son, who had been killed by a whale a year since. The Adamant, the ship he sailed in, had not returned, and it was a consoling hope with Abram, that his boy's chist might come back.

"We heard of poor Charming Handy's death the tenth of September, about three months after Abram began his visits to Temperance," Veronica said.

"Was his name Charming?" I asked.

"His mother named him, Abram said, with a name that she had picked out of Novel's works, which she was forever and 'tarnally reading."

"What day of the month is it, Verry?"

"Third of October."

"What happened a year ago to-day?"

"Arthur fell off the roof of the wood house."

"Verry," he cried, "you needn't tell my sister of that; now she knows about my scar. You tell everything; she does not. You have scars," he whispered to me; "they look red sometimes. May I put my finger on your cheek?"

I took his hand, and rubbed his fingers over the cuts; they were not deep, but they would never go away.

"I wish mine were as nice; it is only a little hole under my hair. Soldiers ought to have long scars, made with great big swords, and I am a soldier, ain't I, Cassy?"

"Have I heard you sing, Cassy?" asked father. "Come, let us have some music."

"'And the cares which infest the day,'" said Verry.

I had scarcely been in the parlor since my return, though the fact had not been noticed. Our tacit compact was, that we should be ignorant of each other's movements. I ran up to my room for some music, and not having a lamp, stumbled over my shawl and bonnet, and various bundles which somebody had deposited on the floor. I went down by the back way, to the kitchen; Fanny was there alone, standing before the fire, and whistling a sharp air.

"Did you carry my bonnet and shawl up stairs?"

"I did."

"Will you be good enough to take this music to the parlor for me?"

She turned and put her hands behind her. "Who was your waiter last year?"

"I had one," putting the leaves under her arm; they fluttered to the floor, one by one.

"You must pick them up, or we shall spend the night here, and father is waiting for me."

"Is he?" and she began to take them up.

"I am quite sure, Fanny, that I could punish you awfully. I am sick to try."

She moved towards the door slowly. "Don't tell him," she said, stopping before it.

"I'll tell nobody, but I am angry. Let us arrive."

She marched to the piano, laid the music on it, and marched out.

"By the way, Fanny," I whispered, 'the bonnet and shawl are yours, if you need them."

"I guess I do," she whispered back.

When I went to my room again my bundles were removed from the floor.

Some of my Surrey acquaintances called soon. They told me I had changed very much. I inferred, by their tone, that they did not consider the change one for the better.

"Veronica has improved very much, don't you think so?" they asked.

"You know," she hastily replied, "that Cassandra has been dangerously ill; she has barely recovered."

Yes, they had heard of the accident; everybody had, in Surrey. Mr. Morgeson, my cousin, must have been a great loss to his family—a man in the prime of life.

"The prime of life," answered Veronica, "you mourn for, do you?"

She went to the piano, and played music so full of wild lamentation, that I again fathomed my desires, and my despair. Her eyes wandered towards me, burning with the fires of her creative power, not with the feelings which stung me to the quick. Her face was calm, white, and fixed. She stopped, and touched her eyelids, as if she were weeping, but there were no tears in her eyes. They were in mine, welling painfully beneath the lids. I turned over the music books to hide them.

"That is a singular piece," said one. "Now, Cassandra, will you favor us? We expect to find you highly accomplished."

"I sang myself out, before you came in."

In the bustle of their going, Veronica stooped over my hand and kissed it, unseen. It was more like a sigh upon it than a kiss, but it swept through me, tingling the scars on my face, as if the flesh had become alive again.

"Take tea with us?" I was asked. "We do not see you in the street, or at church. It must be dull for you, after coming from a boarding-school. Still Surrey has its advantages." And the doors closed on them.

"Still Surrey has its advantages," Veronica repeated.

"Yes, the air is sleepy; I am going to bed."

I made resolutions before I slept that night, which I kept. "Let the dead bury its dead,"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Helen's letters followed me. She had heard from Rosville all that had happened, but did not expatiate upon it. Her letters were full of minute details respecting her affairs. It was

her way of diverting me from the thoughts which she believed troubled me. "L. N." was expected soon. Since his last letter, she had caught herself more than once making inventories of what she would like to have in the way of a wardrobe for a particular occasion, which he had hinted at.

I heard nothing from Alice, and was content that it should be so. Our acquaintance would be resumed in good time, I had no doubt. Neither did I hear from Ben Somers. He was probably investing in another plan; of its result I should hear. It was what I desired—not to be taxed with remembrance and duty; being afflicted with that mild form of ennui, which, without being especially averse, is not disposed to the performance of any task. My chief occupation now was to ride with father, which made me a silent partner in his outside life. The wharves of Milford, the doors of its banks and shipping offices, became familiar. I witnessed bargains and contracts, and listened to talk of shipwrecks, mutinies, insurance cases, perjuries, failures, ruin, and rascalities. The private opinions of those who sought father were never hinted at; there was but one relation between them—Traffic. Their personality was forgotten in the earnest and absorbed attention which they gave to business. They appeared to pursue something beyond Gain, which should narcotize or stimulate them to forget that man's life was a vain going to and fro. Mother reproached father for allowing me to adopt the habits of a man. But he said it was wholesome for me; besides, it would not last. Why was she not willing? He liked to step out of the Ledger into some other book, as he did, when I was his companion.

"Only you do not, father."

At least I reminded him that he was a gambler

"Locke, why do you forget me in your business life? Strange that you should remember Cassy."

"Mary, could I break your settled ways? Were you to be interfered with in the life you arranged for yourself? Cassandra is afloat yet; I can guide her hither and yon. I am with her too; I can dream our youth."

"Is youth so happy?" we both asked.

"We think so, when it is gone."

"Not all of us," she said. "And you think Cassandra has no ways of her own! She can make us change ours; do you know that?"

"May be."

A habit grew upon me of consulting the sea as soon as I rose in the morning. Its aspect decided how my day would be spent

I watched it at last with constant study of its changes, seeking to understand its effect upon me mentally, and ever attracted by its awful materiality, for it always talked to me of the ease with which it could drown me. I was drawn to its shores by night; its vague sphere, swayed by some influence mightier than itself, which made its voice articulate, drew my soul out beside it, to utter speech for speech. I went there by day unobserved, except by our people, for I never walked towards the village. Mother descried me, as she would a distant sail; or aunt Merce, who had a vacant habit of looking from all the windows, a moment from each one, as if she were forever expecting the arrival of somebody who never came. Arthur too saw me, as he played among the rocks, waded, caught crabs and little fish, like all boys whose hereditary associations are amphibious. But Veronica never came to the windows on that side of the house, unless a ship was arriving from a long voyage. Then her interest was in the ship alone, to see whether her colors were half-mast, or if she were battered and torn, recalling to mind those who had died or married since the ship sailed from port; for she knew the names of all who ever left Surrey, and their family relations, if she had no personal acquaintance with them.

Weeks passed before I had completed the furnishing of my room; I had been to Helen's wedding, and had returned, and it was still in progress. The ground was covered with snow. The sea was dark and rough under the frequent north wind; sometimes gray and silent in an icy atmosphere; sometimes blue and shining beneath the pale, winter sun. The day when the room was ready, Fanny made a wood fire, which burned merrily, and encouraged the new chairs, tables, carpet, and curtains, into a friendly assimilation; they met and danced on the round tops of the brass dogs. It already seemed to me that the room was like me. Unlike Veronica, I had nothing odd, nothing suggestive. The curtains were blue chintz, and the sofa and chairs were covered with the same; the ascetic aspect of my two hair-cloth covered arm-chairs, was entirely concealed. The walls were painted a pale amber color, and varnished. There were no pictures, but the shining shadows. A row of shelves covered with blue damask was on one side, and my tall mirror was on the other. The doors were likewise covered with blue damask, nailed round with brass nails. When I had nothing else to do, I counted the nails. The wooden mantel shelf, originally painted in imitation of black marble, was covered with the damask, and fringed. I sent

Fanny down for mother and aunt Merce. They declared, at once, they were stifled; too many things in the room; too warm; too dark; the fringe on the mantel would catch fire and burn me up; too much trouble to take care of it. What was under the carpet, that made it so soft, and the steps so noiseless? How nice it was! Temperance, who had been my aid, arrived at this juncture.

"Did you ever see such a stived up hole, Mis Morgeson?"

"I like it now," she answered, "it is so comfortable. How lovely this blue is!"

"It's a pity she won't keep the blinds shut. The curtains will fade to rags in no time; the sun pores on 'em."

"How could I watch the sea then?" I asked.

"Good Lord! it's a mystery to me, how you can bother over that salt water."

"And the smell of the sea-weed," said aunt Merce.

"And its thousand dreary cries," said mother.

"Do you like my covered doors?"

"I vow," Temperance exclaimed, "the nails are put in crooked! And I stood over Dexter the whole time. He said it was damned nonsense, and that you must be awfully spoiled to want such a thing. 'You get your pay, Dexter,' says I, 'for what you do, don't you?' 'I guess I do,' says he, and then he winked. 'None of your gab,' says I. I do believe that man is a cheat and a rascal, I vow I do. But they are all so."

"In my young days," aunt Merce remarked, "young girls were not allowed to have fires in their chambers."

"In our young days, Mercy," mother replied, "*we* were not allowed to have much of anything."

"Fires are not wholesome to sleep by," Temperance added.

"Miss Veronica never has a fire," piped Fanny, who had remained, occasionally making a stir with the tongs.

"But she ought to have!" Temperance exclaimed vehemently. "I do wonder, Mis Morgeson, that you do not insist upon it, though it's none of my business."

Father was conducted up stairs, after supper. The fire was freshly made; the shaded lamp on the table before the sofa, and the easy-chair pleased him. He came often afterwards, and stayed so long sometimes, that I fell asleep, and found him there, when I woke, still smoking and watching the fire.

Veronica looked in at bed time. "I recognize you here," she said as she passed. But she came back in a few moments, in a wrapper, with a comb in her hand, and stood on the hearth

combing her hair, which was longer than a mermaid's The fire was grateful to her, and I believe that she was surprised at the fact.

"Why not have a fire in your room, Verry?"

"A fire would put me out. One belongs in this room, though. It is the only reality here."

"What if I should say you provoke me?"

"What if you should?"

She gathered up her hair and shook it round her face, with the same elfish look she wore when she combed it with her fingers, and pulled it over her eyes when a child. It made me feel how much older I was.

"I do not say so, and I will not."

"I wish you would; I should like to hear something natural from you."

Fanny, coming in with an armful of wood, heard her. Instead of putting it on the fire, she laid it on the hearth, and sitting upon it with an expression of enjoyment, looked at both of us with an expectant air.

"You love mischief, Fanny," I said.

"Is it mischief for me to look at sisters that don't love each other?" and laughing shrilly, she pulled a stick from under her, and threw it on the fire.

Veronica's eyes shot more sparks than the disturbed coals, for Fanny's speech enraged her. Giving her head a toss, which swept her hair behind her shoulders, she darted at Fanny, and picked her up from the wood, with as much ease as if it had been her handkerchief, instead of a girl nearly as heavy as herself. I started up.

"Sit still," she said, in her low inflexible voice, holding Fanny against the wall. "I must attend to this little demon. Do you dare to think," addressing Fanny with a gentle vehemence, "that what you have just said, is true of *me?* Are you, with your small, starved spirit equal to any judgment against *her?* *I* admire her; you do, too. I *love* her, and I love you, you pitiful, ignorant brat."

Her strength gave way, and she let her go

"All declarations in my behalf are made to third persons," I thought.

"I do believe, Miss Veronica," said Fanny, who did not express any astonishment, or resentment, at the treatment she had received, "that you are going to be sick; I feel so in my bones."

"Never mind your bones. Twist up my hair, and think while you do it, how to get rid of your diabolical curiosity."

"I have had nothing to do all my life," she answered, carefully knotting Verry's hair, "but to be curious. I never found out much, though, till lately;" and she cast her eyes in my direction.

"Put her out, Cassandra," said Verry, "if you like to touch her."

"I'll sweep the hearth, if you please, first," Fanny answered. "I am a good drudge, you know. Good night, ladies."

I followed Veronica, wishing to know if her room was uncomfortable. She had made slight changes since my visit to her. Her flowers had been moved, and the stand where the candle stood was covered with a crimson cloth. The dead bough and the autumn leaves were gone; but instead, there was a branch of waving grasses, green and fresh, and on the table was a white flower, in a vase.

"It is freezing here, but it looks like summer. Is it design?"

"Yes; I can't sit here much, I know; still I can read in bed, and write, especially under my new quilt, which you have not seen."

It was composed of red, black, and blue bits of silk, and beautifully quilted. Hepsey and Temperance had made it for her.

"How about the wicket, these winter nights?"

"I drag the quilt off, and wrap it round me when I want to look out."

We heard a bump on the floor, and Temperance appeared with warm bricks wrapped in flannel.

"You know, that I will not have those things," Verry said.

"Dear me, how contrary you are! And you have not eaten a thing to-day."

"Carry them out."

Her voice was so unyielding, but always so gentle! Temperance was obliged to deposit the bricks outside the door, which she did with a bang.

"I should think you might sleep in Cassandra's room; her bed is big enough for three."

No answer was made to this proposition, but Verry said, "You may undress me, if you like, and stay till you are convinced I shall not freeze."

"I've staid till I am in an ager. I might as well finish the night, I 'spose."

She called me after midnight, for she had not left Verry, who had been attacked with one of her mysterious disorders.

"You can do nothing for her; but I am scared out, when she faints so dreadful, and don't like to be alone."

Veronica could not speak, but she shook her head at me to go away. Her will seemed to be concentrated against losing consciousness; it slipped from her occasionally, and she made a rotary motion with her arms, which I attempted to stop; but her features contracted so terribly, I let her alone.

"Mustn't touch her," said Temperance, whose efforts to relieve her were confined to replacing the coverings of the bed, and drawing her nightgown over her bosom, which she often threw off again. Her breath scarcely stirred her breast. I thought more than once that she did not breathe at all. Its delicate, virgin beauty touched me with a holy pity. We sat by her bed in silence a long time, and although it was freezing cold, did not suffer. Suddenly she turned her head, and closed her eyes. Temperance softly pulled up the clothes over her, and whispered: "It is over for this time; but Lord, how awful it is! I hoped she was cured of these spells."

In a few minutes, she asked, "What time is it?"

"It must be about eleven," Temperance replied; but it was nearly four. She dozed again, but opening her eyes presently, made a motion towards the window.

"There's no help for it," muttered Temperance, "she must go."

I understood her, and put my arm under Verry's neck to raise her. Temperance wrapped the quilt round her, and we carried her to the window. Temperance pushed open the window—an icy wind blew against us.

"It is the winter that kills little Verry," she said, in a child-like voice. "God's breath is cold over the world, and my life goes. But the spring is coming; it will come back."

I looked at Temperance, whose face was so corrugated with the desire for crying, and the effort to keep from it, that for the life of me, I could not help smiling. As soon as I smiled I laughed, and then Temperance gave way to crying and laughing together. Veronica stared, and realized the circumstances in a second. She walked back to the bed, laughing faintly too. "Go to bed, do. You have been here a long time, have you?"

I left Temperance tucking the clothes about her, kissing her, and calling her 'her deary, and her best child.'

I could not go to bed at once, for Fanny was on my hearth,

before the fire, which she had re-kindled, watching the boiling of something.

"She has come to, hasn't she?" stirring the contents of the kettle. "I knew it was going to be so with her, she was so mad with me. She is like the Old Harry before she has a turn, and like an angel after. I am fond of people who have their ups and downs. I have seen her so before. She asked me to keep the doors locked once; they are locked now. But I couldn't keep *you* out. The doctor said she must have warm drinks as soon as she was better. This is gruel."

"If it is done, away with you. Calamity improves you, don't it? You seem in excellent spirits."

'First rate; I can be somebody then."

CHAPTER XXV.

Before Spring, there were three public events in Surrey. A light-house was built on Gloster Point, below our house. At night there was a bridge of red, tremulous light between my window and its tower, which shortened the distance. A town clock had been placed in the belfry of the new church, which stood in the western part of the village. Veronica could see the tips of its gilded hands from the top of her window, and could hear it strike through the night, whether the wind was fair to bring the sound or not. The light-house reminded her of distance. With the clock it was different. She liked to hear the hours cry that they had gone. Soon after the clock was up, she recollected that Mrs. Crossman's dog had ceased to bark at night, as was his wont. She sent her a note, inquiring about the dog, for she thought there was something poetical in connection with nocturnal noises, which she hoped Mrs. Crossman felt also. Fanny conveyed the note, and read it likewise, as Mrs. Crossman declared her inability to read writing with her new spectacles, which a pedlar had cheated her with lately. She laughed at it, and sent word to Veronica, that she was the curiousest young woman for her age that she had ever heard of; that the dog slept in the house of nights, for he was blind and deaf now; but that Crossman should get a new dog with a loud bark.

A new dog soon came, so fierce, that Abram told Temperance her people were afraid to pass Crossman's. She guessed

it wasn't the dog that people were afraid of, but of their evil consciences, which pricked them when they remembered Dr. Snell.

The third event was Mr. Thrasher's Revival. It began in February, and before it was over, I heard the April frogs croaking in the marshy fields behind the church. We went to all the meetings, except Veronica, who continued her custom of going only on Sunday afternoons. Mr. Thrasher endeavored to proselyte me, but he never conversed with her. His manner changed when he was at our house; if she appeared, the man tore away the mask of the minister. He was a Bible banger, making the dust fly from the pulpit cushions too much to suit her; besides, he denounced sinners with vituperation, larding his piety with a grim wit which was distasteful. He was resentful towards me, especially after he had seen her. It was needful, he said, from my influence in Surrey, that I should become an example; and he asked me if I did not think my escape from sudden death in Rosville, was an especial indication from Providence, that I was reserved for some work?

Surrey was never so evangelical as under his ministration, and it remained so until he was called to a larger field of usefulness, and offered a higher salary to till it We settled into a milder theocracy after he left us. Mr. Park renewed his zeal, about this time, resuming his discussions; but mother paid little attention to what he said. There were days now when she was confined to her room. Sometimes I found her softly praying. Once when I went there, she was crying aloud, in a bitter voice, with her hands over her head. She was her old self when she recovered from these attacks, except that she appeared more indifferent to the practical details of life. And we forgot that she had them. She sought amusement more, and liked to have me with her, to make her laugh, and aunt Merce was near her, to pet her, as she always had done.

Abram Handy, inspired with religious fervor during the revival, was also inspired with the twin passion—love—to visit Temperance, and begged her, with so much eloquence, to marry him before his cow should calve, that she consented, and he was happy. He should have the best of butter to sell, if Temperance would make it. He spent the Sunday evenings with her, coming after conference meeting, hymn book in hand. She was angry and ashamed, when I happened to see them sitting in the same chair, and singing, in a quavering voice, "Greenland's Icy Mountains." She continued morose for a week, in consequence.

"What will Veronica do without me?" she said. "I vow I wish Abram Handy would keep himself out of my way; who wants him?"

"She will visit you, and so shall I."

"Certain true, will you really?"

"If you will promise to return our visits. Leave Abram at home, for a week now and then."

"Done. I can mend your things, and look after Mis Morgeson. Your mother is not the woman she was, and you and Veronica haven't a mite of faculty. What you are all coming to, is more than I can fathom."

"Who will fill your place?"

"I don't want to brag, but you won't find a soul in Surrey to come here, and live, as I have lived. You will have to take a Paddy; the Paddies are spreading, the old housekeeping race is going. Hepsey and I are the last of the Mohicans, and Hepsey is failing."

She was right, we never found her equal, and when she went, in May, a Celtic dynasty came in. We missed her sadly. Verry refused to be comforted. Symptoms of disorganization appeared everywhere; but they died away after a while, or we ceased to notice them.

In the summer Helen visited Surrey. Her enlivening gayety was the means of our uniting round her. She was never tired of Veronica's playing, nor of our society; so we must stay where she and the piano were. We trimmed the parlor with flowers every day. Veronica transferred some of her favorite books to the round table, and privately sent for a set of flower vases. When they came, she said we must have a new carpet to match them, and although mother protested against it, she was loud in her admiration when she saw the handsome white Brussels, thickly covered with crimson roses. Helen's introduction proved an astonishing incentive; we set a new value on ourselves. I never saw so much of Veronica as at that time; her health improved with her temper. She threw us into fits of laughter with her whimsical talk, never laughing herself, but enjoying the effect she produced. To please her, Helen changed her style of dress, and bought a dress at Milford, which Veronica selected and made. The trying on of this dress was the means of her discovering the letters on Helen's arm, which never ceased to be a source of interest. She asked to see them every day afterwards, and touched them with her fingers, as if they had some occult power.

"Do you think her strange?" I asked Helen

"She has genius; but she will be a child always."

"You are mistaken; she was always mature."

"She stopped in the process of maturity long ago. It is her genius which takes her on. You advance by experience."

"I shall learn nothing more."

"Of course, you have suffered immensely, and endured that which isolates you from the rest of us."

"You are as wise as ever."

"Well, I am married, you know, and shall grow no wiser. Marriage puts an end to the wisdom of women; they do not need it."

"You are nineteen years old?"

"What is the use of talking to you? Besides, if we keep on we may tell secrets that had better not be revealed. We might not like each other so well; friendship is apt to dull if there is no ground of speculation left. Let us keep the bloom on the fruit, even if we know there is a worm at the core."

I owed it to her that I never had any confidante. My proclivities were for speaking what I felt; but her strong common sense influenced me greatly against it. I naturally felt more freedom towards men, and her teaching was the more easy to me, as she never invaded my sentiments.

Her visit was the occasion of our exchanging civilities with our acquaintances, which we neglected when alone. Tea parties were always fashionable in Surrey. Veronica went with us to one, given by our cousin, Susan Morgeson. She had taken tea out but twice, since she was grown, she told us, and then it was with her friend Lois Randall, a seamstress. To this girl she read the contents of her blank-books, and Lois in her turn confided to Veronica her own compositions. Essays were her forte. We met her at Susan Morgeson's, and, as I never saw her without her having on some article given her by Veronica, this occasion was no exception. She wore an exquisitely embroidered purple silk apron, over a dull blue dress. I saw Verry's grimace when her eyes fell on it, and could not help saying, "I hope Lois's essays are better than her taste in dress."

"She is an idiot in colors; but she admires what I wear so much, that she fancies the same must become her."

"As they become you?"

"I make a study of dress; I am such an anomaly I must. It may be wicked, but what can I do? I must look agreeable."

The dress she wore was an India stuff, of linen, with a

cream-colored ground, and a vivid yellow silk thread woven in stripes through it; each stripe had a cinnamon-colored edge. There was no ornament about her, except a band of violet-colored ribbon round her head. When tea was brought in, she asked me in a whisper, whether it was tea or coffee, in the cup which was given her.

"Why, Cass," said Helen, "are you making a wonderment because she does not know? It is strange that you have not known that she drinks neither."

"What does she drink?"

'Is it eccentric to drink milk?" Verry asked, swallowing the tea with an accustomed air. "I think this must be coffee, it stings my mouth so."

"It is green tea," said Helen; "don't drink it, Verry."

"Green tea," she said in a dreamy voice. "We drank green tea years ago, in our old house; and I did not know it! Cassandra, do you remember that I drank four cups once, when mother had company? I laughed all night, and Temperance cried."

"I remember you well in those days."

"Give me your cup," said Helen.

"No."

She contributed her share towards entertaining, and invariably received the most attention. My indifference was called pride, and her reserve was called dignity, and dignity was more popular than pride.

Before Helen went, Ben wrote me that he was going to India. It was a favorite journey with the Belemites. By the time the letter reached me he should be gone. Would I bear him in remembrance? He would not forget me, and promised me an Indian idol. In eighteen months he expected to be at home again; sooner perhaps. P.S. Would I give his true regards to my sister? N.B. The property would be divided according to his grandfather's will, before his return, and he wanted to be out of the way for sundry reasons, which he hoped to tell me some day. I read the letter to Helen and Veronica. Helen laughed, and said 'Unstable as water;' but Veronica looked displeased; she closed her eyes as if to recal him to mind, and asked Helen abruptly if she did not like him.

"Yes; but I doubt him. With all his strength of character he has a capacity for failure."

"I consider him a relation," I said.

"*I* do not own him," said Veronica.

"At all events, he is not an affectionate one," Helen remarked. "You have not heard from him in a year."

"But I knew that I should hear."

"We shall *see* him," said Veronica.

I was dull and sad after I had received his letter; without reason, of course, so I ascribed my dullness to some personal reflections which I made at the time. It might be because I had never regained my good looks. There was a dimness on my youth; was it going? But what did it matter? Still I pitied myself; for every woman desires to embalm in the memory of a lover those inexplicable physiognomical phases which are so fleeting, and I was no exception to my race.

I grew careless then. Helen's influence went, when she went. Those observances, so vital to Veronica, and so charming in her, I became utterly neglectful of. It was as true as it was deplorable, but it appeared as if my moral sense was incapable of stimulation.

For all this, I was at times possessed with a mad longing for a new world, which should contain no element of the old, least of all a reminiscence of what my experience had made me.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Alice Morgeson sent for aunt Merce, asking her to fulfil the promise she had made when she was in Rosville. With misgivings she went, staid a month, and returned with Alice. I felt a throe of pain when we met, which she must have seen, for she turned pale, and the hand she had extended towards me fell by her side; overcoming the impulse, she offered it again, but I did not take it. I had no evidence to prove that she came to Surrey on my account; but I was sure that such was the fact, as I was sure that there was a bond between us, which she did not choose to break, nor to acknowledge. She appeared as if expecting some explanation, or revelation from me; but I gave her none, though I liked her better than ever. She was business-like, and observant. Her tendencies, never romantic, were less selfish; it was no longer society, dress, housekeeping, which absorbed her, but a larger interest in the world, which gave her a desire to associate with men and women, independent of caste. None of her children were with her; had it been three years earlier, she would not have left

home without them. Her hair was a little gray, and a wrinkle or two had gathered about her mouth; but there was no other change. I was not sorry to have her go, for she paid me a close and quiet observation. At the moment of departure, she said, in an under tone: "What has become of that candor of which you were so proud?"

"I am more candid than ever," I answered, "for I am silent."

"I understand you better, now that I have seen you *en famille*."

"What do you think?"

"The Puritans have something to answer for in your mother's composition." Turning to mother, she said: "Arthur is like his father."

"He must be taught something," mother answered.

"I want to know but one thing more, mother," said Arthur, "and that is to navigate a ship. I am going to Polynesia."

"And be a missionary?" asked aunt Merce.

"To preach them out of their easy ways, their nice mats and calabashes? No, no; *ki ki muee muee*—that's comfortable language; no grammar in it."

"The carriage is ready," Fanny announced.

"Ask Edward if he will go with me to Polynesia, cousin Alice, will you?" Arthur begged.

"Good-bye, Arthur; you will come to Rosville first." She kissed him, and drove off.

'No more visitors this year," said Veronica, yawning.

"No agreeable ones, I fancy."

"All the relations have had their turn for this year," remarked aunt Merce. But she was mistaken; an old lady came, soon after this, to spend the winter. She lived but four miles from Surrey, but she brought with her all her clothes, and a large green parrot, which her son had brought from foreign parts. Her name was Joy Morgeson; the fact of her being cousin to father's grandmother, entitled her to a raid upon us at any season, and to call us 'cousins.' She felt, she said, that she must come, and attend the meetings regular, for her time upon earth was short. But Joy was a hearty woman still, and, pious as she was, delighted in rough and scandalous stories, the telling of which gave her severe fits of repentance. She quilted elaborate petticoats for us; knit stockings for Arthur, and parched corn, and made molasses candy. Mr. and Mrs. Elisha Peckam surprised us next. They arrived from "up country," and staid two weeks. I did not clearly understand

why they came, before they went; but as they enjoyed their visit, it was of little consequence whether I did or not.

Mid winter passed, and we still had company. There was much to do, and it was done without system. Mother or aunt Merce detailed from their ordinary duties as keeper of the visitors, Fanny was for the first time able to make herself of importance in the family tableaux, and assumed cares no one had thought of giving her. She left the town school, without permission, telling mother that learning would be of no use to her. The rights of a human being merely, was what she wanted, and she should fight for them; that was what paupers must do. Mother called her a wicked, ungrateful girl, and allowed her to do as she pleased. Her duties commenced with calling us up to breakfast en masse, and for once the experiment was successful, for we all met at the table. The dining room was in complete order, a thing that had never happened early before. No one was pleased, except father; the rest of us missed the straggling breakfast which consumed so much time.

"Whose doing is this?" he asked, looking round the table.

"It is Fanny's," I answered, rattling the cups. "All the coffee to be poured out at once, don't agitate me."

Fanny, bearing buckwheat cakes, looked proud and modest, as people do who appreciate their own virtues.

"Why, Fanny," said father, "you have done wonders; you are more original than Cassy, or Verry."

Her green eyes glowed; her aspect was so feline, that I expected her hair to rise.

"Father's praise pleases you more than ours," Verry said.

"You never gave me any," she answered, marching out.

Father looked up at Verry, annoyed, but said nothing. We paid no attention to Fanny's call afterwards; but she continued her labors, which proved acceptable to father. Temperance told me, when she was home for a week, that his overcoats, hats, umbrellas and whips, never had such care as Fanny gave them He omitted from this time, to ask us if we knew where his belongings were, but went to Fanny; and I noticed that he required much attendance.

Temperance, who had arrived in the thick of the company, as she termed it, was sorry to go back to Abram. He *was* a good man, she said; but it was a dreadful thing for a woman to lose her liberty, especially when liberty brought so much idle time. "Why, girls, I have quilted and darned up every rag in the house. He *will* do half the housework himself; he

is an everlasting Betty." She was cheerful, however, and helped Hepsy, as well as the rest of us.

The guests did not encroach on my time, but it was a relief to have them gone, and the house our own once more.

I went to Milford again, almost daily, to benumb myself with cold, and feast my eyes with the bleak, flat, gray landscape. The desolation of winter sustains our frail hopes. Nature is kindest then; she does not taunt us with fruition. It is the luxury of summer which tantalizes—her long, brilliant, blossoming days, her dewy, radiant nights.

I entered the house after dark one March evening, when it was unusually still, and had reached the front hall, when masculine tones struck my ear. I opened the parlor door softly, and saw Ben Somers in an easy chair, basking before a glowing fire, with a luminous face set towards Veronica, who was near him, holding a small screen between her and the fire. "She is always ready," I thought, contemplating her as I would a picture. Her ruby-colored merino dress absorbed the light; she was a mass of deep red, except her face and hair, above which her silver crescent comb shone. Her slender feet were tapping the rug. She wore boots the color of her dress; Ben was looking at them. Mother was there, and in the background aunt Merce and Fanny figured. I pushed the door wide, and a stream of cold air reached them, which made them look towards it. "Cassandra," they said. Ben started up, and met me with extended hands.

"I went as far as Cape Horn only, but I bought you the idol, and lots of things from a ship we met; it's all the same. I have been home a week, and I have come here. Are you glad? Can I stay?"

"Yes, yes," chorused mother and aunt Merce; but I was too busy, trying to get my gloves off, to speak. Father welcomed him with warmth, and Fanny ran out for a lamp; Veronica changed the position of her screen, when it was brought in.

"Did you have a cold ride?" asked mother, gazing into the fire, with that expression of satisfaction we have when we think that somebody has been exposed to hardships instead of ourselves. This is the secret of the enjoyment we feel when we go to see people hung.

My bonnet strings were in a knot, and, losing my patience, I asked Fanny for a pair of scissors. She took a pair from her pocket; but aunt Merce, unable to bear such a sacrifice, interfered, and untied them, all present feeling so much inte-

rest in the operation, that conversation was suspended. Fanny and aunt Merce were called, and were shortly followed by mother. Ben stood before me; his eyes, full of sharp rays, pierced me through, and rested on the three thread-like scars which traversed my cheek, and which were more visible than usual, from the effect of cold.

"Tatooed still," I said, pointing to them.

A sorrowful look crossed his face; he took my hand and kissed it, and I kissed his in turn. Veronica, who had dropped the screen on her lap, met my glance towards her with one perfectly impassive. Instantly I saw myself, as they saw me. The tall girl, clothed in a gray dress, whose deep and energetic voice vibrated in their ears like a question—whose face was ineffaceably marked, whose air was repellant — baffled them. Both would have annihilated my personality, if possible, for the sake of comprehending me, and both loved me, in their way.

"And why did you not complete your voyage?"

"There was no need of going further."

"Did you come to visit me?"

"What are you reading, father?" Veronica asked, leaving her seat.

"To-day's letters. I must go to Boston. Will you go?"

"My sister, Adelaide, has sent for you, Cassandra," said Ben, "to visit her. Will you go too, Miss Veronica?"

"Thanks; I must decline. But if Cass should go, and she will, I *will* go to Boston."

He looked at her curiously. "It would not be pleasant, perhaps, for you to try Belem. I do not like it; but I am anxious to have Cassandra there. I feel a fate-impelling power in regard to the matter."

"May I go, father?"

"If mother is willing."

"Please come to supper," said Fanny.

"Have you meat, Fanny?"

"Something on purpose for you, Mr. Morgeson—split eels."

"Young woman," said Ben, "do you call that ferocious dish meat?"

"Oh, there's something for you."

Mother was seated at the table, but was devouring the end of a chapter in "The Hour and the Man." Aunt Merce eyed the dishes with the aspect of a judge. Fanny, according to habit, took her place behind Veronica's chair, close to father. With the most dégagé air in the world, Ben suffered nothing

to escape his attention, not even my amusement at the unconsciousness they felt of his observation, except Fanny, who, aware of it, watched him sharply. We talked of Helen's visit —a subject that could be commented on freely. Veronica told Ben Helen's opinion of him; he reddened slightly, and said that such a sage could not be contradicted. When father remarked, that the opinions of women were whimsical, Fanny gave an audible sniff, which made Ben give her his attention, and father exchanged a look with her.

Soon after tea I met Veronica in the hall, with a note in her hand. She stopped, and hesitatingly said, that she was going to send for Temperance; she wanted her while Mr. Somers staid.

"Your forethought astonishes me."

"She is a comfort, you know."

"Do you stand in especial need of a comforter?"

She looked puzzled, laughed, and went on.

Temperance was there that evening, in time to administer a scolding to Fanny.

"That girl needs looking after," she said. "She is as sharp as a needle. She met me in the yard and told me that a man fit for a nobleman, had come on a visit. 'It may be to Cass,' says she, 'and it may not be. I have my doubts.' Did you ever?" concluded Temperance, counting the knives. "There's one missing. By jingo! it has been thrown to the pigs, I'll bet."

When Ben made a show of going, we asked him to stay longer. He said 'Yes,' so cordially, that we laughed. But it hurt me to see that he had forgotten all about my going to Belem. "I like Surrey so much," he said, "and you all, I have a fancy that I am in the Hebrides, in Magnus Troil's dwelling; it is so wild here, so naive. I like the unadulterated taste of sea spray."

"We will have Cass, for Norna," said Verry; "but by the way, it is you that must be of the fitful head; have you forgotten that she is going to Belem soon?"

"I shall remember Belem in good time; no fear of my forgetting that ace—ancient spot. At least I may wait till your father goes to Boston, and we can make a party. You will be ready, Cassandra? I wrote Adelaide yesterday that you were coming, and mother will expect you."

It stormed the first day of his visit. We had driving rains, with a gale from the south-east; the sea was dark and miry after the storm ceased, and patches of blue sky were visible.

We rendevouzed in the parlor, which had assumed an easy air, from the manner in which Ben disposed chairs, cushions, and books. Veronica played to him, or they read together; while thus engaged I withdrew to be idle elsewhere. One day—an intolerably long one to me, they were so much absorbed in reading—I did not seek them till dusk; the book was then laid aside.

"Come and sing," said Ben.

"How kind of you to remember that I can sing. I have been longing to compete with Verry."

"That is false; but sing. There is a spell in this wierd twilight; sing, or I go to the rocks yonder, to break it."

He dropped the curtain across the window, and sat down by me at the piano.

"Now listen

I feel the breath of the summer night,
Aromatic fire:
The trees, the vines, the flowers are astir
With tender desire.

If I were alone, I could not sing,
Praises to thee;
Oh night! unveil the beautiful soul
That awaiteth me!"

"A foolish song," said Veronica, pulling her hair across her face. No reply. She glided to the flower-basket, broke a rose-bud from its stalk, and mutely offered it to him. Whether he took it, I know not; but he rose up beside me, like a dark cloud, and my eyes followed him.

"Come," he whispered, "give me yourself. I love you Veronica."

He sank down before her, and she clasped her hands round his head, and kissed his hair.

"I know it," she said, in a clear voice.

I shut the door softly, thinking of the wandering Jew; went up stairs, humming a little air between my teeth, and came down again into the dining-room, which was in a blaze of light

"What preserves are these, Temperance? Some of Abram's quinces?"

"Best you ever tasted, since you were born

"Call Mr. Somers, Fanny," said mother. "Is Verry in the parlor, too?"

"I'll call them," I said; "I have left my handkerchief there."

"Is anything else of yours there?" said Fanny, close to my ear.

Ben had pushed back the curtain, and was staring into the darkness, and Veronica was walking to and fro on the rug.

"Haven't I a great musical talent?" I inquired.

"Am I happy?" she asked me.

Ben turned to speak, but she put her hand over his mouth, and said, "Hush!"

"Why should I be 'hushed,' my darling?"

"Come to supper, and be sensible;" I urged.

The light revealed a new expression in Verry's face—an unsettled, dispossessed look; her brows were knitted, yet she smiled over and over again, while she seemed hardly aware that she was eating like an ordinary mortal. The imp Fanny tried experiments with her, by offering the same dishes repeatedly, till her plate was piled high with food she never tasted.

The next day was clear, and mild with spring. Ben and I started for a walk on the shore. We were half way to the light-house before he asked why it was that Veronica would not come with us.

"She never walks by the shore; she detests the sea."

"Is it so? I did not know that."

"Do you mind that you do not know any of her tastes or habits? I speak of this as a general truth."

"I am a spectacle to you, I suppose. But this sea charms me; I shall live by it, and build a house with all the windows and doors towards it."

"Not if you mean to have Verry in it."

"I do mean to have her in it. She shall like it. Are you willing to have me for a brother? Will you go to Belem, and help break the ice? *She* could never go," and he began to skip pebbles in the water.

"I will take you for a brother gladly. You are a fool—not for loving her, but all men are fools when in love, they are so besotted with themselves. But I am afraid of *one* fault in you."

"Drunkard?"

"Drunkard."

"On my honor, I have not that fault. But why not leave me to God? Didn't you leave yourself that way once?"

"Oh cruel!"

"Pardon me, dear Cass. I *must* do well enough, surely, for I *have* done well; that you know. Will you believe in me?"

"I have no disbelief."

"I thought I should want to marry her, when I first knew you. I love her passionately," and he threw a pebble farther

than he had yet; "but she is so pure, so delicate, that when I approach her, in spite of my besottedness, my love grows lambent. That's not like me, you know," with great vehemence. "Will she never understand me?"

"Probably not; but you must manage for yourself, and her. As you must have discerned, Veronica and I are far apart, and shall be. She is, as you say, pure, beautiful, and noble; but peculiar. I shall have no voice between you."

"You must, you do. We shall hear it if you do not speak. You have a great power, tall enchantress."

"Certainly. What a powerful life is mine!"

"You come to these shores often. Are you not different beside them? This colorless picture before us—these vague spaces of sea and land—the motion of the one—the stillness of the other—have you no sense that you have a powerful spirit?"

"Is it power? It is pain."

"Your gold has not been refined then"

"Yes, I confess that I have a frantic sense of power; but it is not a spiritual sense."

"Let us retrace our steps."

We mused on our footprints in the wet sand as we passed them. We were told when we reached home, that Veronica had gone on some expedition with Fanny. She did not return till time for supper, looking elfish, and behaving whimsically, as if she had received instructions accordingly. I fancied that the expression Ben regarded her with might be the Bellevue Pickersgill expression, it was so different from any I had seen. There was a haughty curiosity in his face; as she passed near him, he looked into her eyes, and saw that strange cast in them, which made their sight so far off.

"Veronica, where are you?" he asked.

The tone of his voice attracted mother's regards; an intelligent glance was exchanged, and then her eyes sought mine. "It is not as you thought, mamma," I telegraphed. But Verry, not bringing her eyes back into the world, merely said, "I am here, am I not?" and went to shut herself up in her room. I found her there, looking through the wicket.

"The buds are beginning to swell," she said. "I should hear small voices breaking out from the earth. I grow happy every day."

"Because the earth will be green again?" I asked, in a coaxing voice.

She shut the wicket, and looking in my face, said, "I will go down immediately." For some reason the tears came into

my eyes, which she, taking up the candle, saw. "I am going to play," she said hurriedly, "come." She ran down before me, but turning, by the foot of the stairs, she pointed to the parlor door, and said, "Is he my husband?"

"Answer for yourself. Go in, in God's name."

Ben was chatting with father over the fire; he stretched out his hand to her, with so firm and assured an air, and looked so noble, that I felt a pang of admiration for him. She laid her hand in his a moment, passed on to the piano, and began to play divinely, drawing him to her side. Father peeled off a wet fragment of his cigar, as he contemplated them with a thoughtful countenance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

When we went to Boston we took a new hotel, as Ben had advised, deserting the old Bromfield for the Tremont. It was dusk when we arrived, and tea was served immediately, in a large room full of sombre mahogany furniture. Its atmosphere oppressed Veronica, who ate her supper in silence.

"Charles Dickens is here, sir," said the waiter, who knew Ben. "Two models of the Curiosity Shop have just gone up stairs, sir. His room is right over here, sir."

Veronica looked adoringly at the ceiling.

"Then," said Ben, "our hunters are up from Belem. Anybody in from Belem, John?"

"Oh yes, sir, every day."

"I'll look them up," he said to us; but he returned soon, and begged us not to look at Dickens, if we had a chance.

Veronica, with a sigh gave him up, and lost a chance of being immortalized with that perpetual and imperturbable beef-steak, covered with "the blackest of all possible pepper," which was daily served to him.

Father being out in pursuit of a cigar, Ben asked Veronica what she would do, while he was in Belem.

"Walk round this lion-clawed table."

"I shall be gone too, you know."

"Alas!"

"Are we to part this way?"

"Father," she said, as he entered with a theatre bill, "can I marry this friend of Cassy's?"

"Have you the courage? Do you know each other?"

"Having known Cassandra so long, sir," began Ben, but was interrupted by Veronica's exclaiming, "We do not know each other at all. What is the use of making *that* futile attempt? I am over eighteen; do you know me, father?"

"If I do not, it is because you have no shadow."

"Shall I?" she said, giving Ben a delicious smile. "I promise."

"I promise too, Veronica," heaven dawning in his eyes.

"We will see about it," said father. "Who will go to the theatre?"

We declined, but Ben signified his willingness to accompany him.

We took the first morning train, so that father could return before evening, and ran through in the course of an hour the wooden suburbs of Belem, bordered by an ancient marsh, from which the sea had long retired. Taking a cab, we turned into Norfolk street, at the head of which, Ben said, a mile distant, was his father's house. It was not a cheerful street, and when we stopped before an immense, square, three-storied house, it looked still more gloomy. There was a gate on one side, with white wooden urns on the posts, that shut off a paved courtway. On each side of the street were houses of the same pattern, with the same gates. Down the paved court of the opposite house, a coach, pulled by two fat horses, clattered, and as the coach turned, we saw two old ladies inside, highly dressed, bowing and smiling at Ben.

"The Miss Hiticutts—hundred thousand apiece."

"Hundred thousand a piece," I echoed in an anguish of admiration, which made father laugh, and Ben scowl. A servant in a linen jacket opened the door. "Is it yoursel, Mr. Ben?"

"Open the parlor door, Murph. Where's my mother and my sister?"

"Miss Somers is taking her exercise, sir, and Mrs. Somers is with the owld gentleman;" opening the door, with the performance of taking father's hat.

"Sit down, Cassandra. I'll look up somebody."

It was a bewildering matter where to go; the room, vast and dark, was a complete litter of tables, and sofas. The tables were loaded with lamps, books, and knick-knacks of every description; the sofas were strewn with English and French magazines, novels, and papers. I went to the window, while father perched on the music stool.

My attention was diverted to a large dog in the court, chained

to a post, near a pump, where a man was giving water to a handsome bay horse, at the same time keeping his eye on an individual who stood on a stone block, dressed in a loose velvet coat, a white felt hat, and slippers down at the heel. He had a coach whip in his hand—the handsomest hand I ever saw, which he snapped at the dog, who growled with rage. I heard Ben's voice in remonstrance; then a lazy laugh from velvet coat, who gave the dog a cut, which made him bound. Ben, untying him, was overwhelmed with caresses. "Down, you fool! Off, Rash!" he said. "Look there," pointing to the window, where I stood. The gentleman with the coach whip looked at me also. The likeness to Ben, turned my suspicion into certainty, that they were brothers His disposition, I thought, must be lovely, judging from the episode with "Rash." I turned away, almost running against a lady, who extended her fingers towards me, with a quick, little laugh, and said:

"How de do? Where's Ben, to introduce us properly?"

"Here, mother," he said, behind her, followed by the dog. "You were expecting Cassandra, my old chum; and Mr. Morgeson has come to leave her with us."

"Certainly. Rash, go out, dear. Mr. Morgeson, I am sorry to say," she spoke with more politeness, "that Mr. Somers is confined to his room with gout. May I take you up?"

"I have a short time to stay," looking at his watch, and rising. "Do you consider the old school friendship between your son and Cassandra a sufficient reason for leaving her with you? To say nothing of the faint relationship which, we suppose, exists."

"Of course, very happy; Adelaide expects her," she said vaguely. I saw at once that she had never heard a word of our being relations. Ben had managed nicely in the affair of my invitation to Belem. But I desired to remain, in spite of Mrs. Somers's reception, which had produced the impression that she did not want me.

Mr. Somers was bolstered up in bed, in a flowered dressing gown, with a bottle of colchicum and a pile of Congressional reports, on a stand beside him. His urbanity was extreme; it was evident that the gout was not allowed to interfere with his deportment, though the joints of his hands were twisted, and knotty. He expatiated upon Ben's long, ungratified wish for a visit from me, and thanked father for complying with it. He mentioned the memento of the miniature, and gave every particular of Locke Morgeson's early marriage, explaining the exact shade of consanguinity—a faint one. I glanced at Mrs.

Somers, who sat remote, in the act of inspecting me, with an eye askance, which I afterwards found was her mode of looking at those whom she doubted, or disliked; it changed its expression as it met mine, into one of haughty wonder, that said there could be no tie of blood between us. She irritated and embarrassed me. I tried to think of something to say, and uttered a few words, which were uncommonly trivial, and awkward. Mr. Somers touched on politics. The door opened, and Ben's brother entered, with downcast eyes. Advancing to the foot-board of the bed, he leaned his chin on its edge, looked at his father, and in a remarkably clear, ringing voice, said:

"The check."

Mr. Somers coughed behind his hand. "To-morrow will do, Desmond."

"To-day will do."

"Desmond," said Ben in a low voice, "you do not see Mr. Morgeson, and Miss Morgeson. My brother, Cassandra."

"Beg pardon, good morning;" and he pulled off his hat, with an air of grace which became him, though it was very indifferent. Mrs. Somers, in a soft voice said, "Ring, Des, dear, will you?" He warned her with a satirical smile, and gave such a pull at the bell rope that it came down. Her florid face flushed a deeper red, but he had gone. Father looked at his watch, and got up with alacrity.

"You are to dine with us, at least, Mr. Morgeson."

"I must return to Boston on account of my daughter, who is there alone."

"Have you been remiss, Ben," said his father, affectionately, "in not bringing her also?"

"She would not come of course, father."

A tall black-haired girl of twenty-five rushed in.

"Why, Ben," she said, "you were not expected. And this is Miss Morgeson," shaking hands with me. "You will spend a month, won't you?" She put her chin in her hand, and scanned me with a cool deliberateness. "Pa, do you think she is like Caroline Bingham?"

"Yes, so she is; but fairer. She is a great belle," nodding to me.

"Do you *really* think she looks like her, Somers?" said Mrs. Somers, in a tone of denial.

"Certainly, but handsomer," Adelaide replied for him, without looking at her mother.

"Would you like to go to your room?" she asked. "What

a pretty dress this is!" taking hold of the sleeve, her chin in her hand still. "We will have some walks; Belem is nice for walking. Pa, how do you feel now?"

She allowed me to go down stairs with father, without following, and sent Murphy in with wine and biscuit. I put my arms round his neck and kissed him, for I had a lonesome feeling, which I could not define, at the last moment.

"You will not stay long," he said; "there is something oppressive in this atmosphere."

"Something artificial, is it? It must be the blood of the Bellevue Pickersgills that thickens the air."

"Now," said Ben, with father's hat in his hand, "the time is up."

Adelaide was at the door to take courteous leave of him, and Mrs. Somers bowed from the top of the stairs, revealing a pair of large ankles, whose base rested in a pair of shabby, pudgy slippers. Adelaide took me to my room, telling me not to change my dress, but to come down soon, for dinner was ready. Hearing a bell I hurried down into the parlor which we were in before, and waited for directions respecting the dinner. Adelaide came presently. "We are dining; come and sit next me," offering her arm. Mrs. Somers, Desmond, and a girl of fifteen were at the table. The latter had just come from school, I concluded, as a satchel of books hung at her chair. Murphy was removing the soup, and I derived the impression that I had been forgotten. While taking mine, they vaguely stared about, till Murphy brought in the roast mutton, except Adelaide, who rubbed her teeth with a dry crust, making a feint of eating it. Desmond kept the decanter, occasionally swallowing a glass full.

"What wine is that, Murphy?" Mrs. Somers asked. He hesitatingly answered, "I think it is the Juno, mum."

"You stole the key from pa's room, Des," said the girl. He shook the carving knife at her, at which gesture she said, "Pooh," and applied herself to the roast mutton with avidity. They all ate largely, especially the girl, whose wide mouth was filled with splendid teeth. Mrs. Somers made a motion with her glass for Murphy to bring her the wine, and pouring a teaspoonful, held it to her mouth, as if she were practicing drinking healths. Her hands were beautiful, too; they all had handsome hands, whose movements were graceful and expressive. When Ben arrived, Murphy set the dishes before him, and Adelaide began to talk, in a lively, brilliant way. He did not ask for wine, but I saw him look towards it, and Desmond.

The decanter was empty. After the pudding, Mrs. Somers arose, and we followed her; but she went up stairs, and we went to the back parlor. The girl, taking a seat beside me, said, "My name is Ann Somers. I am never introduced, Adder, my sister, is in the way, you know. I dare say, Ben never spoke of me to you. I am never spoken of, am never noticed. I have never had new dresses; yet pa is my friend, the dear soul."

Adelaide looked upon her with the same superb indifference with which she regarded her mother, and Desmond "Would you like to go to your room?" she asked again. "You are too tired to take a walk, I suppose?"

"Lord," said Ann, "do let her do as she likes. Adder, don't be too disagreeable."

I picked up my bonnet, which she took from me, and put on the top of her head. We all went up stairs.

"Murph must bring up your trunk," said Ann, opening the closet. "But there is no space to hang anything; the great Moguless's wardrobe stops the way."

My chamber was stately in size and appointments. The afternoon sun shone in, where a shutter was open, behind the dull red curtains, and illuminated the portrait of a nimble old lady in a scarlet cloak, which hung near the gigantic curtained bed, over a vast chair, covered with faded green damask.

"Grandmother Pickersgill," said Ann, who saw me observing the picture. Adelaide contemplated it also. "It was painted by Copley," she said, "when Lord Lyndhurst was in this country. Grandfather entertained him, and he went with grandmother to one of her sittings; he complimented her on her beauty. But you see that she has not a handsome hand. Ours is the Pickersgill hand," and she spread her fingers like a fan.

"She was a regular old screw," said Ann, "and had mother's underclothes tucked to last for ever; and she was a beast to servants."

My trunk was brought in, which I unlocked, and unpacked. Adelaide opened a drawer in a great bureau.

"Oh, you know it is full of Marm's fineries," said Ann, in a confidential tone; "I'll ring for Hannah." Adelaide busied herself in throwing the contents of the drawers on the floor. "There's her ball dresses," commented Ann, as a pink satin, trimmed with magnificent lace, tumbled out. "Old Carew brought the lace over for her."

"Bring a basket, Hannah, and take these away somewhere, to some other closet of Mrs. Somers."

"That gold fringe, do you remember, Adder? She looked like an elephant with his howdah on, when she wore it."

Her impertinence inspired Adelaide, who joined her in a flow of vituperative wit, at the expense of their mother, and other relatives, incidentally brought in. Instead of being aghast, I enjoyed it, and was feverish with a desire to be as brilliant; my vocabulary was deficient. My sense of inferiority was active during the whole of my visit in Belem. I blushed often, smiled foolishly, and was afflicted with a general apprehension in regard to gaucherie.

I changed my travelling dress, as they were not inclined to leave me, with anxiety, for I was weak enough to wish to make an impression, with my elegant bearing and appointments. Being so anatomized, I was oppressed with an indefinite discouragement. Their stealthy, sharp, selfish scrutiny brought out my failures. My dress seemed ill-made; my hair was unbecomingly dressed; my best collar and ribbon, which I put on, were nothing to the lace I had just seen falling on the floor. When we descended it was twilight. Ann said she must study, and left us by the parlor fire. Adelaide lighted a candle, and took a novel, which she read, reclining on a sofa. Reclining on sofas, I discovered, was a family trait, though they were all in a state of the most robust health, with the exception of Mr. Somers. I walked up and down the rooms. "They were fine once," said Ben, who appeared from a dark corner, "but are faded now. Mother never changes anything, if she can help it. She is a terrible aristocrat," he continued in a low voice, "fixed in the ideas embedded in the Belem institutions, which only move backwards. We laugh, though, at everybody's claims but our own. You despised me for mentioning the Hiticutt's income; it was the atmosphere."

"It amuses me to be here."

"Of course; but stir up Adelaide, she is genuine; has fine sense, and half despises her life; but she knows no other, and is proud."

"Let's go and find tea," she said, yawning, and dropping her book. "Why don't that lazy Murph light the lamp? I wish pa was down, to regulate affairs." No one was at the tea table but Mrs. Somers.

"Ben is very polite, don't you think so?" she said, with her peculiar laugh, which made my flesh creep, when he pulled up a chair for me. Her voice made me dizzy, but I smiled.

Ben was not the same in Belem, I saw at once, and no longer wondered at its influence, or at the vacillating nature of his plans and pursuits. Mrs. Somers gave me some tea from a spider-shaped silver tea pot, which was related to a spider-shaped cream jug, and a spider-shaped sugar dish. The polished surface of the mahogany table reflected a pair of tall silver candlesticks, and the plates, being of warped blue and white Chinese ware, joggled and clattered when we touched them. The tea was delicious; I said so, but Mrs Somers deigned no answer. We were regaled with spread bread and butter, and baked apples. Adelaide ate six.

"We do not have your Surrey suppers," Ben remarked.

"How should you know?" his mother asked. Ben's eyes looked violent, and he bit his lips. Adelaide commenced speaking, before her mother had finished her question, as if she only needed the spur of her voice, to be lively and agreeable, *per contra*.

"Hepburn must ask us to tea. Her jam, and her gossip are wonderful. Aunt Tucker might ask us too, with housekeeper Beck's permission. I like tea fights with the old Hindoos. They like us, too, Ben; we are the children of Hindoos, also—superior to the rest of the world. There will be a party or two for this young person."

"Parties be hanged!" he said. "Then we must have a rout here, and I hate 'em."

"But we owe an entertainment," said Mrs. Somers. "I have been thinking of giving one, as soon as Mr. Somers gets out."

"I have no such idea," said Adelaide, with her back towards her mother. "We shall have no party until some one has been given to our young friend, Ben."

Ben and I visited his father, who asked questions relative to the temperature, the water, and the dietetic qualities of Surrey. He was affable, but there was no nearness in his affability. He skated on the ice of appearances, and that was his vocation in his family. He fulfilled it well, but it was a strain sometimes. His family broke the ice now and then, which must have made him plunge into the depths of reality. I learned to respect his courage, bad as his cause was. Marrying Bellevue Pickersgill for her money, he married his master, and was endowed only with the privilege of settling her taxes. Simon Pickersgill, her father, tied up the main part of his money for his grandchildren. It was to be divided among them when the youngest son should arrive at the age of twenty-one—an event

which took place, I supposed, while Ben was on his way to India. Desmond, and an older son, who resided anywhere except at home, made havoc with the income. As the principal prospectively was theirs, or nearly the whole of it, why should they not dispose of that?

At last Mr. Somers looked at his watch, a gentle reminder that it was time for us to withdraw. Adelaide was still in the parlor, lying on her favorite sofa, contemplating the ceiling. I asked permission to retire, which she granted without removing her regards. In spite of my sound sleep that night, I was startled from it by the wail of a young child. The strangeness of the chamber, and the continued crying, which I could not locate, kept me awake, till dawn peeped through the curtains.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A few days after my arrival, some friends dined with Mrs. Somers. The daughters of a Senator, as Ann informed me, and an Ex-Governor, or I should not have known this fact, for I was not introduced. The dinner was elaborate, and Desmond did the honors. I sat next him, and when he asked me what wine I would have, I promptly offered him the glass intended for water. He adroitly rectified my mistake, exchanging smiles with his mother, which of course cost me my composure, and my appetite. But their place was supplied by an ample sense of insignficance, which he might have discovered, for he did not glance my way again, nor speak to me. With the walnuts, one of ladies asked for the baby.

Mrs. Somers made a sign to Desmond, who pulled the bell rope —mildly this time. An elderly woman instantly appeared with a child a few months old, puny and anxious-looking. Mrs. Somers took it from her, and placed it on the table; it tottered and nodded to the chirrups of the guests. Ben, from the opposite side of the table, addressed me by a look, which enlightened me. His voyage to India was useless, as the property would stand for twenty-one years more, lacking some months, unless Providence interposed. Adelaide was oblivious of the child; but Desmond thumped his glass on the mahogany to attract it, for its energies were absorbed in swallowing its fists, and fretfully crying. When Murphy announced coffee in the parlor, the nurse took it away; and after coffee and sponge cake were

served, the visiters drove off. That afternoon some friends of Adelaide called, to whom she introduced me as "cousin." She gave me graphic descriptions of them, after their departure. One had achieved greatness by spending her winters in Washington, and contracting a friendship with John C. Calhoun. Another was an artist, who had painted an ideal head of her ancestor, Sir Roger de Roger, not he who had arrived some years ago, as a weaver from Glasgow, but the one who had remained on the family estate. A third reviewed books, and collected autographs.

The next afternoon one of the Miss Hiticutts from across the way came, in a splendid camel's-hair shawl and a shabby dress. "How *is* Mr. Somers?" she asked. "He is such a martyr."

Here Mrs. Somers entered. "My dear Bellevue, you are worn out with your devotion to him; when have you taken the air?" She did not wait for a reply, but addressed Adelaide with: "This is your young friend, and where is my favorite, Mr. Ben, and little Miss Ann? Have you anything new? I went down to Harris yesterday to tell her she must sweep away her old trash of a circulating library, and begin with the New Regime of Novels, which threatens to overwhelm us."

Adelaide talked slowly at first, and then soared into a region, where I had never seen a woman—an intellectual one. Miss Hiticutt followed her, and I experienced a new pleasure. Mrs. Somers was silent, but she listened with respect to Miss Hiticutt, for she was of the real Belem azure in blood, as well as in brain. Besides, she was rich, and would never marry. It was a Pickersgill hallucination to be attentive to people who had legacies in their power. Mrs. Somers had a bequested fortune already, in hair rings, and silver ware. She appeared to listen to Adelaide, but her eyes wandered over to me with speculation askant in them. Adelaide was so full of esprit that I was again smitten with my inferiority; from this time I felt a respect for her, which never declined, although she married an Englishman, who, too choleric to live in America, took her to Florence, where they settled with their own towels and silver, and are likely to remain, for her heart is too narrow to comprise any further interest in Belem.

Miss Hiticutt chatted herself out, giving us an invitation to tea, for any day, including Ben, and Miss Ann, who had not been visible since breakfast.

April rains kept us in doors for several days. Ann refused to go to school. She must have a holiday; besides, pa needed

her; she alone could take care of him, after all. Her mother said that she must go.

"Who can make me, mum?"

Desmond ordered the coach for her. When it was ready he put her in it, seated himself beside her, with provoking nonchalance, and carried her to school. Murphy, with his velvet-banded hat, left her satchel at the door, with a ceremonious air, which made Ann slap his cheek, and call him an old grimalkin. But she was obliged to walk home in the rain, after waiting an hour, for him to come back.

Mr. Somers hobbled about his room, with the help of his cane, and said that he should be out soon, and requested Adelaide to put in order some book shelves that were in the third story, for he wanted to read without confusion. We went there together, and sorted some odd volumes; piles of Unitarian sermons, bound magazines, political works, and a heap of histories. Ben found a seat on a bunch of books, pleased to see us together.

"This is a horrid hole," he said. "I have not been up in this floor for ages. How do the shelves look?"

A hiccough near us, caused us to look towards the door.

"It is only Des, in his usual afternoon trim," said Ben.

She nodded.

He pushed open the door, thrusting in his head. "What the hell are you doing here? This region is sacred to Chaos and old Night;" striking the panels, first one, and then the other, with the tassels of his dressing-gown. No one answered him. Adelaide counted a row of books, and Ben whistled.

"Damn you, Ben," he said in a languid voice; "you never seem bored. Curse you all. I hate ye, especially that she-Calmuck yonder—that Siberian-steppe-natured, Malachite-hearted girl, our sister"

"Oh come away, Mr. Desmond. What are the poor things doing, that you should harry them?" and the woman who had brought in the baby the day of the dinner, laid her hands on him, and pulled him away.

"Sarah will never give him up," said Ben.

"She swears there is good in him. I think he is a wretch," turning over the leaves of a book with her beautiful hand; such a hand as I had just seen beating the door—such a hand as clasped its fellow in Ben's hair. Adelaide was not embarrassed at my presence. She neither sought, nor avoided my look. But Ben said, "You are thinking."

"Is she?" And Adelaide raised her eyes.

"You are all so much alike," I said.

"You are right," she answered seriously. "Our grandfather"—

"Confound him!" broke in Ben. "I wish he had never been born. Are you proud, Adde, of being like the Pickersgills? But I know you are. Remember that the part of us which is Pickersgill, hates its like. I am off; I am going to walk."

Adelaide coolly said, after he had gone, that he was very visionary: predicting changes that could not be, and determined to bring them about.

"Why did he bring me here?" I asked, as if I were asking in a dream.

"Ben's hospitality is genuine. He is like pa. Besides, you are related to us—on the Somers' side, and are the first visitor we ever saw, outside of mother's connection. Do you not know, too, that Ben's friendship is very sincere—very strong?"

"I begin to comprehend the Pickersgills," I remarked in my dream. "How words with any meaning glance off, when addressed to them. How impossible it is to return the impression they give. How incapable they are of appreciating what they cannot appropriate to the use of their idiosyncrasies."

She gazed at me, as if she heard an abstract subject discussed, with a slight interest in her black eyes.

"Are they vicious to the death?" I went on in my dream. 'It is not fair—their overpowering personality—it is not fair to others. It overpowers me, though I know it is *all* fallacious."

"I am ignorant of Ethical Philosophy."

"Miss Somers," said Murphy knocking, "if Major Millard is below?"

"I am coming."

She smiled when she looked at me again. I stared at her with a singular feeling. Had I touched her, or had I made a fool of myself?

"There is some nice gingerbread in the closet. Sha'nt I get you a piece?"

I fell out of my dream.

"Major Millard is an old beau. Come down, and captivate him. He likes fair women."

Declining the gingerbread, I accepted the Major. He was an old gentleman, in a good deal of highly starched linen, amusing himself by teazing Ann, who liked it, and paid him in impertinence. Adelaide played chess with him. Desmond sauntered in about nine, threw himself into a chair behind

the sofa where I sat, and swung his arm over the back. The chessboard was put aside, and a gossipy conversation was started, which included Mrs. Somers, who was on a sofa across the room, but he did not join in it. I watched Mrs. Somers, as her fingers moved with her Berlin knitting, feeling more composed and settled as to my identity, in spite of my late outburst, than I had felt at any moment since my arrival in Belem. They were laughing at a funny description, which Ann was giving of a meeting she had witnessed between Miss Hiticutt and Mr. Pearsall, a gentleman lately arrived from China, after a twenty years' residence, with several lacks of rupees. Her delineation of Miss Hiticutt, who attempted to appear as she had twenty years before, was excellent. Ben, who was rolling and unrolling his mother's yarn, laughed till the tears ran, but Major Millard looked uneasy, as if he expected to be served a-la-Hiticutt by the satirical Ann after his departure. Before the laughter subsided, I heard a low voice at my ear, and felt a slight touch from the tip of a finger on my cheek.

"How came those scars?"

I brushed my cheek with my handkerchief, and answered,

"I got them in battle."

He left his chair, and walked slowly through the room into the dark front parlor. Major Millard took leave, and was followed by Mrs. Somers and Ann, neither of whom returned. As Ben stretched himself on his sofa with an air of relief, Desmond emerged from the dark, and stood behind him, leaning against a column, with his hands in his coat pockets, and his eyes searchingly fixed upon me. Ben turning his head in my direction, sprang up so suddenly that I started; but Desmond's eyes did not move till Ben confronted him, then he gave him a haughty smile, and begged him to take his repose again.

I went to the piano and ran my fingers over the keys.

"Do you play? Can you sing?" asked Adelaide, rousing herself.

"Yes."

"Do sing. I never talk music; but I like it."

"Some old song," said Ben.

Singing

> "Drink to me only with thine eyes,
> And I will pledge with mine,"

I became conscious that Desmond was near me. With a perfectly pure voice he joined in the song:

> "The thirst that from the soul doth rise,
> Doth ask a drink divine."

As the tones of his voice floated through the room, I saw the white sea-birds flashing between the blue deeps of our summer sea and sky, and the dark rocks that rose and dipped in the murmuring waves.

CHAPTER XXIX.

One pleasant afternoon Adelaide and I started on a walk. We must go through the crooked length of Norfolk street, till we reached the outskirts of Belem, and its low fields not yet green ; that was the fashionable promenade, she said. After the two o'clock dinner, all Belem walked. All her acquaintances seemed to be in the street, so many bows were given and returned with ceremony. Nothing familiar was attempted ; nothing beyond the courtliness of an artificial smile.

Returning, we met Desmond with a lady, and a series of bows took place. Desmond held his hat in his hand till we had passed ; his expression varied so much from what it was when I saw him last, at the breakfast table, he being in a desperate humor then, that it served me for mental comment for some minutes.

"That is Miss Brewster," said Adelaide. "She is an heiress, and fancies Desmond's attentions ; she will not marry him, though."

"Is every woman in Belem an heiress ?"

"Those we talk about are, and every man is a fortune-hunter. Money marries money ; those who have none do not marry. Those who wait, hope. But the great fortunes of Belem are divided ; the race of millionaires is decaying."

"Is that Ann yonder ?"

"I think so, from that bent bonnet."

It proved to be her ; but she went by us with the universal bow and grimace, sacrificing to the public spirit with her fine manners. She turned soon, however, and overtook us, proposing to make a detour to Drummond Street, where an intimate family friend, 'Old Hepburn,' lived, so that the prospect of our going to tea with her might be made probable, by her catching a passing glimpse of us ; at this time she must be at the window with her Voltaire, or her Rousseau. The proposition was accepted, and we soon came near the house, which

stood behind a row of large trees, and looked very dismal, with three-fourths of its windows barred with board shutters.

"Walk slow," Ann intreated. "I see her blinking at us She has not shed her satin pelisse yet."

Before we got beyond it a dirty little girl came out of the gate, in a pair of huge shoes, and a canvas apron, which covered her, to call us back. Mrs. Hepburn had seen us, and wished us to come in, wanting to know who Miss Adelaide had with her, and to talk with her. She ran back, re-appearing again at the door, out of breath, and minus a shoe. As we entered a small parlor, an old lady in a black dress, with a deep cape, held out her withered hand, without rising from her straight-backed arm-chair, smiling at us, but shaking her head furiously at the small girl, who lingered in the door.

"Mari, Mari," she called; but no Mari came, and the small girl took our shawls, for Mrs. Hepburn said we must stay, now that she had inveigled us inside her doors. Ann mimicked her to her back, but to her face her manners were servile. The name of Morgeson belonged to the early historical time of New England, she informed me. I never knew it; but I bowed, as if not ignorant. Old Mari must be consulted respecting the sweetmeats, and she went after her.

"What an old mouser it is!" said Ann. "What unexpected ways she has! She scours Belem in her velvet shoes, to find out everybody's history. Don't you smell buttered toast?"

"Your father is getting the best of the gout," said Mrs. Hepburn, returning. "How is Desmond? He may be the wickedest of you all, but I like him the best. I shall not throw away praise of him on you, Adelaide." And she looked at me.

"He bows well," I said.

"He resembles his mother, who was a great beauty. Mr Somers was handsome, too. I was at a ball at Governor Flam's, thirty years ago. Your mother was barely fifteen, then, Adelaide; she was just married, and opened the ball."

She examined me, all the while, with a pair of small, round eyes, from which the color had faded, but which were capable of reading me.

Tea was served by candle-light, on a small table. Mrs. Hepburn kept her eyes on everything, talking volubly, and pulled the small girls' ears, or pushed her by the shoulder, with faith that we were not observing her. The toast was well buttered, the sweetmeats were delicious, and the cake was heavenly, as Ann said. Mrs. Hepburn ate little, but told us a great deal

about marriages in prospect, and incomes which waxed or waned in consequence. When tea was over, she said to the small girl who removed the tea things, "On your life taste not of the cake, or the sweetmeats; and bring me two sticks of wood, you huzzy." She arranged the sticks on a decaying fire, inside a high brass fender, pulled up a stand near the hearth, lighted two candles, and placed on it a pack of cards.

"Some one may come, so that we can play."

Meantime she dozed upright, waking, talking, and dozing again, like a crafty old parrot.

"She has a great deal of money saved," Ann whispered behind a book. "She is over seventy. Oh! she is opening her puss eyes."

Adelade mused, after her fashion, on the slippery hair-cloth sofa, looking at the dim fire, and I surveyed the room. Its aspect attracted me, though it was precise and stiff. An ugly Turkey carpet covered the floor; a sideboard was against the wall, with a pair of silver pitchers on it, and two tall vases, filled with artificial flowers, under glass shades. Old portraits hung over it. Upon one I fixed my attention.

"That is the portrait of Count Rumford," Mrs. Hepburn said.

"Can't we see the letters?" begged Ann. "And won't you show us your trinkets? It is three or four years since we looked them over."

"Yes," she answered, good-humoredly; "ring the bell."

An old woman answered it, to whom Mrs. Hepburn said, in a friendly voice, "The box in my desk." Adelaide and Ann said, "How do you do, Mari?" When she brought the box, Mrs. Hepburn unlocked it, and produced some yellow letters, which we looked over, picking out here and there bits of Parisian gossip, many, many years old. They were directed to Cavendish Hepburn, by his friend, the original of the portrait. But the letters were soon laid aside, and we examined the contents of the box. Old brooches, miniatures painted on ivory, silhouettes, hair rings, necklaces, ear-rings, chains and finger rings.

"Did you wear this?" asked Ann with a longing voice, slipping an immense sapphire ring on her fore-finger.

"In Mr. Hepburn's day," she answered, taking up a small case, which she unfastened and gave me. It contained a peculiar pair of ear-rings, and a brooch of aqua marina stones, in a setting perforated like a net.

"They suit you. Will you accept such an old-fashioned ornament? Put the rings in; here Ann, fasten them."

Ann glared at her in astonishment, and then at me, for the reason which had prompted so unexpected a gift.

"Is it possible that I am to have them? Why do you give them to me? They are beautiful."

"They came from Europe long ago," she said. "And they happen to suit you."

> 'Sabrina fair,
> Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
> In twisted braids of lilies knitting
> The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair.'"

"Those lines make me forgive Paradise Lost," said Adelaide.

"They are very long, these ear-rings," Ann remarked.

I put the brooch in the knot of ribbon I wore; Mrs. Hepburn joggled the white satin bows of her cap in approbation.

The knocker resounded. "There is our partner," she cried.

"It must be late, ma'am," said Adelaide; "and I suspect it is some one for us. You know we never venture on impromptu visits, except to you, and our people know where to send."

"Late or not, you shall stay for a game," she said, as Ben came in, hat in hand, declaring he had been scouting for us since dark. Mrs. Hepburn snuffed the candles, and rang the bell. The small girl, with a perturbed air, like one hurried out of a nap, brought in a waiter, which she placed on the sideboard.

"Get to bed," Mrs. Hepburn loudly whispered, looking over the waiter, and taking from it a silver porringer, she put it inside the fender, and then shuffled the cards.

"Now, Ann, you may sit beside me and learn."

"If it is whist, mum, I know it. I played every afternoon at Hampton last summer, and we spoiled a nice polished table, we scratched it so with our nails, picking up the cards."

"Young people do too much, now-a-days."

I was in the shadow of the sideboard; Ben stood against it.

"When have you played whist, Cassandra?" he asked in a low voice.

"Is my name Cassandra?"

"Have you forgotten that, too?"

"Does it rain?"

"It is not October."

"The yellow leaves do not stick to the panes. Would you like to see Helen?"

"Play with me, Ben," called Mrs. Hepburn.

"Ann, try your skill," I entreated, "and let me off."

"She can try," Mrs. Hepburn said sharply. "Don't you like games? I should have said you were by nature a bold gamester." And she dealt the cards rapidly, and was soon absorbed in the game, though she quarreled with Ann occasionally, and knocked over the candlestick once. Adelaide played heroically, and was praised, though I knew that she hated play.

Two hours passed before we were released. The fire went out, the candles burnt low, and whatever the contents of the silver porringer, they had long been cold. When Mrs. Hepburn saw us determined to go, she sent us to the sideboard for some refreshment. "My caudle is cold," taking off the cover of the porringer. "Why, Mari, what is this?" she said, as the woman made a noiseless entrance with a bowl of hot caudle.

"I knew how it would be," she answered, putting it into the hands of her mistress.

"I am a desperate old rake, you mean, Mari. There, take your virtue off, you appal me."

She poured the caudle into small silver tumblers, and gave them to us. "The Bequest of a Friend" was engraved on them. Her fingers were like ice, and her head shook with fatigue; but her voice was sprightly, and her smile bright. Ann ate a good deal of sponge cake, and omitted the caudle, but I drank mine to the memory of the donor of the cup.

"You know that sherry, Ben," and Mrs. Hepburn nodded him towards a decanter. He put his hand on it, and took it away. "None to-night," he said. Mari came with our shawls, and we hastened away, hearing her shoot the bolt of the door behind us. Ben drew my arm in his, and the girls walked rapidly before us. It was a white, hazy night, and the moon was wallowing in clouds.

"Let us walk off the flavor of Hep's cards," said Adelaide, "and go to Wolfe's Point."

"Do you wish to go?" he asked me.

"Yes."

Ann skipped. A nocturnal exeursion suited her exactly.

"You are not to have the toothache to-morrow, or pretend to be lame," said Adelaide.

"Not another hiss, Adder. En avant!"

We passed down Norfolk street, now dark and silent, and reached our house. A light was burning in a room in the third story, and a window was open. Desmond sat by it, his

arms folded across his chest, smoking, and contemplating some object beyond our view. Ann derisively apostrophized him, under her breath, while Ben unlocked the court gate, and went in after Rash, who came out quietly, and we proceeded. I looked behind me and stumbled.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Are you afraid?"

"Yes."

"Of what?"

"The Prince of Darkness."

"The devil lives."

"In you?"

"In Rash. Look at him; he is bigger than Faust's dog, jumps higher, and is blacker. You can't hear the least sound from him; he gambols with some familiar."

We left the last regular street on that side of the city, and entered a road, bordered by trees and bushes, which hid the country from us. We crept through a gap in it, crossed two or three spongy fields, and ascended a hill, reaching an abrupt edge of rock, over whose earthy crust we had walked. Below it I saw a strip of sea, hemmed in on all sides, for the light was too vague for me to see its narrow outlet. It looked milky, misty, and uncertain; the predominant shores stifled its voice, if it ever had one. Adelaide and Ann crouched over the edge of the rock, reciting, in a chanting tone, from a poem beginning,

> "The river of thy thoughts must keep
> Its solemn course, too still and deep
> For idle eyes to see."

Their false intonation of voice, and the wordy spirit of the poem, convinced me that poetry with them was an artificial taste. I walked away. The dark earth and rolling sky were better. Ben followed me.

"I hope Veronica's letter will come to-morrow," he said with a groan.

"Veronica! Who is Veronica?"

"Don't torment me."

"Does she write letters?"

"I have written her."

"She has never written me."

"I may be the means of revealing you to each other."

"Ben, your native air is deleterious."

"You laugh. I feel what you say. I do not attempt to play the missionary at home. My field is not here."

"You were wise not to bring Veronica."

"She would see what I hate myself for."

"One may venture farther with a friend than a lover."

"I thought that *you* might understand the results of my associations. Curse them all! Come, girls, we must go back."

CHAPTER XXX.

I took a cold that night. Belem was damp always, but its midnight damp was worse than any other. Mrs. Somers sent me medicine. Adelaide asked me with an air of contemplation, what made me sick, and felt her own pulse. Ann criticized my night-gown ruffles, and accused me of wearing imitation lace; but nursing was her forte, and she staid by me, annoying me by a frequent beating up of my pillow, and the bringing in of bowls of strange mixtures for me to swallow, which she persuaded the cook to make, and her father to taste.

Before I left my room, Mrs. Somers came to see me.

"You are well, I hear," she said, in a cold voice.

I felt as if I had been shamming sickness.

"I thought that you were in remarkable health, your frame is so large."

Adelaide was there, and answered for me. "You *are* delicate. It must be because you do not take care of yourself."

"Wolf's Point?" I asked.

"I have walked to Wolf's Point for fifteen years, night and day."

"Mr. Munster's man left this note for you," her mother said, handing it to her.

She read an invitation from Miss Munster, a cousin, to a small party.

"You will not be able to go," Mrs. Somers remarked to me.

"You will go," Adelaide said; "it is an attention to you altogether."

"Do you think so?"

But Adelaide made her no reply; she never replied to her mother, and never asked her any questions, so that talking between them was a one-sided affair.

"Let us go out shopping, Adelaide; I want some lace to wear."

Mrs. Somers looked into her drawers, out of which Adelaide had thrust her finery, and found mine, but said nothing.

"We are going to a party, Ann. Thanks to your messes, and your nursing."

"Where is your evening dress?"

"Pinned in a napkin—like my talent."

"Old cousin Munster, the pirate, who made his money in the opium trade, has good things in his house. I suppose." with a coquettish air, "that you will see Ned Munster; he *would* walk to the door with me to-day. He wishes me out, I know."

We consumed that evening in talking of dress. Adelaide showed me her camel's-hair scarfs which Desmond had brought, and her dresses. Ann tried them all on, walking up and down, and standing tip toe before the glass, while I trimmed a handkerchief with the lace I had purchased. I unfolded my dress after they were gone, with a dubious mind. It was a heavy, white silk, with a blue satin stripe. It might be too old-fashioned, for it had belonged to mother, who would never wear it. The sleeves were puffed with bands of blue velvet, and the waist was covered with a berthé of the same. It must do, however, for I had no other.

We were to go at nine. Adelaide came to my room dressed, and with her hair arranged exactly like mine. She looked well, in spite of her Mongolic face.

"Pa wants to see us in his room; he has gone to bed."

"Wait a moment," I begged. I took my hair down, unbraided it, brushed it out of curl as much as I could; twisted it into a loose mass, through which I stuck pins enough to hold it; bound a narrow fillet of red velvet round my head, and ran after her.

"That is much better," she said; "you are entirely changed." Desmond was there, in his usual careless dress, hanging over the foot board of the bed, and Ann was huddled on the outside. Mrs. Somers was reading.

"Pa," said Ann, "just think of Old Hepburn's giving her a pair of lovely ear-rings."

"Did she? Where are they?" asked Mrs Somers.

"I am not surprised," said Mr. Somers. "Mrs. Hepburn knows where to bestow. Why not wear them?"

"I'll get them," said Ann.

Mr. Somers continued his compliments. He thought there was a pleasing contrast between Adelaide and myself; referred to Diana; mentioned that my hair was remarkably thick; and proceeded with a dissertation on the growth and decay of the hair, when she returned with the ear-rings.

"It is too dark," she said.

Desmond, who had remained silent, took the candle, which

Mrs. Somers was reading by, and held it for Ann, close to my face. The operation was over, but the candle was not taken back till Mrs. Somers asked for it sharply.

"I dare say," murmured Mr. Somers, who was growing drowsy, "that Mrs. Hepburn wore them some night, when she went to John Munster's, forty years ago, and now you wear them to the son's. How things come round!"

The Munster's man opened the door for us.

The rooms were full. "Very glad," said Mr., Mrs., and Miss Munster, and amid a loud buzz we fell back into obscurity. Adelaide joined a group, who were talking at the top of their voices, with most impassionate countenances.

"They pretend to have a Murillo here; let us go and find it," said Ben.

It was in a small room. While we looked at a dark-haired, handsome woman, standing on brown clouds, with hand so fat that every finger stood apart, Miss Munster brought up a young gentleman, with the Munster cast of countenance.

"My brother begs an introduction, Miss Morgeson."

Ben retired, and Mr. Munster began to talk volubly, with wandering eyes, repeating words he was in danger of forgetting. No remarks were required from me. At the proper moment he asked me to make the tour of the rooms, and offered his arm. As we were crossing the hall I saw Desmond, hat in hand, and in faultless evening dress, bowing to Miss Munster.

"Your cousin Desmond, and mine, is a fine-looking man, is he not? Let us speak to him."

I drew back. "I'll not interrupt his devoir."

He bowed submissively.

"My cousin Desmond," I thought; "let me examine this beauty." He was handsomer than Ben, his complexion darker, and his hair black. There was a flush across his cheek bones, as if he had once blushed, and the blush had settled. The color of his eyes I could not determine. As if to resolve my doubt, he came towards us; they were a deep violet, and the lids were fringed with long black lashes. I speculated on something animal in those eyes. He stood beside me, and twisted his heavy mustache.

"What a pretty boudoir this is," I said, backing into a little room behind us.

"Ned," he said abruptly, "you must resign Miss Morgeson, I am here to see her."

"Of course," Ned answered; "I relinquish."

Before a word was spoken between us, Mrs. Munster touched Desmond on the shoulder, and told him that he must come with her, to be introduced to Count Montholon.

'Bring him here, please."

"Tyrant," she answered playfully, "the Count shall come."

He brought a chair. "Take this: you are pale. You have been ill." Bringing another he seated himself before me, and fanned himself with his hat.

Mrs. Munster came back with the Count, an elderly man, and Desmond rose to meet him, keeping his hand on the back of his chair. They spoke French. The freedom of their conversation precluded the idea of my understanding it. The Count made a remark about me. Desmond replied, glancing at me, and both pulled their mustaches. The Count was called away soon, and Desmond resumed his chair.

"I understood you," I said.

"The deuce you did."

He put his hat over a vase of flowers on a table near us. The vase fell over, of course; he leisurely righted it, and leaning towards me, said: "In battle?"

"Yes."

"So, women like you, pure, with no vice of blood, sometimes struggle, suffer, and are tempted."

His words made me wince horribly.

"It was a drawn battle."

"If you prove, beyond all doubt, that a woman can reason with her impulses, or even fathom them, I shall be in your debt."

"You are my debtor, but—*Ben is coming*."

He looked at me in astonishment.

"You must find all this very dull, Cassandra," Ben said, as he joined us.

"*Cassandra*," said Desmond, "are you bored?"

The accent with which he spoke my name set my pulses striking like a clock. I got up mechanically, as Ben directed.

"They are going to supper. There's game, Des. Munster told me to take the north-east corner of the table."

"I shall take the south-west, then," he replied, nodding to a tall gentleman who passed with Adelaide. When we left him, he was observing a carved oak chair, in occult sympathy with the grain of the wood. Nature strikes us with *her* phenomena, at times, in spite of our self-occupation.

We were compelled to wait at the door of the supper-room, the jam was so great.

"What fairy story do you like best?" asked Ben.

"I know which you like."

"Well?"

"Bluebeard. You have an affinity with sister Ann in the tower."

"Do you think I see nothing 'but the sun which makes a dust, and the grass which looks green?' I believe you like Bluebeard, too."

That was a great joke, at which we both laughed.

When I saw Desmond again, he was surrounded by men, the French Count among them, all drinking champagne. He held a bottle, the neck of which he had broken, and was talking fast. The others were laughing. His listless, morose expression had disappeared; in the place of a brutal-tempered, selfish, bored man, I saw a brilliant, jovial gentleman. Which was the real man?

"Finish your jelly," said Ben.

"I prefer looking at your brother."

"Leave my brother alone."

"You see nothing but 'the sun which makes a dust, and the grass which looks green.'"

Miss Munster hoped that I was cared for. How gay Desmond was. He wore a new look; but she thought him strongly marked with the family traits.

"Have I those traits, Mary?" inquired Ben.

"Oh, you are eccentric."

"And the rest of us are not?"

"Now we must go." Adelaide said.

We were among the last; the carriage was waiting. We made our bows to Mrs. Munster, who complained of not having seen us. "You are a favorite of Mrs. Hepburn's, Miss Morgeson, I am told. She is a remarkable woman; has great powers." I mentioned my one interview with her. Guests were going up stairs with smiles, and coming down without, released from their company manners. We rode home in silence, except that Adelaide yawned fearfully, and toiled the long stairs, separating with a tired 'good night.'

I extinguished my candle, by dropping my shawl upon it, and groped in vain for matches over the tops of table and shelf.

"To bed in the dark, then," I said, pulling off my gloves, and the band from my head for I felt a tightness from it, and pulled out the hair pins. But a desire to see myself in the

glass overcame me. I felt unacquainted with myself, and must see what my aspect indicated.

I crept down stairs, to the dining room, passed my hands over the sideboard, the mantle-shelf, and took the round of the dinner table, but found nothing to light my candle with.

"The fire may not be out in the parlor," I thought; "it can be lighted there." I ran against the hat stand in the hall, knocking a cane down, which fell with a loud noise. The parlor door was ajar;—the fire was not out, and Desmond was before it, studying its decay.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The candle," I stammered, confused with the necessity of staying to have it lighted, and the propriety of retreating in the dark.

"Shall I light it?"

I stepped a little farther inside the door and gave it to him. He grew warm with thrusting it between the bars of the grate, and I grew chilly. Shivering, and with chattering teeth, I made out to say, "A piece of paper would do it." Raising his head hastily, it came crash against the edge of the marble shelf. Involuntarily I shut the door, and leaned against it, to wait for the effect of the blow; but feeling a pressure against the outside, I yielded to it, and moved aside. Mrs. Somers entered, with a candle flaring in one hand, and holding with the other her dressing gown across her bosom.

"What are you doing here?" she asked harshly, but in a whisper, her eyes blazing like a panther's.

"Doing?" I replied. "Stay and see."

She swept along, and I followed, bringing up close to Desmond, who had his hand round his head, and was very pale, either from the effect of the blow, or some other cause. Even the flush across his cheeks had faded. She looked at him sharply; he moved his hands from his head, and met her eyes. "I am not drunk for once, you see," he said in a low voice. She made an insulting gesture towards me, which meant, "Is this an adventure of yours?"

The blaze in her eyes kindled a more furious one in his; he stepped forward with a threatening motion.

Anger raged through me; but it was like a fierce rain that strikes flat a violent sea. I laid my hand on her arm, which she snapped at, like a wolf.

"You tender, true-hearted creature, full of womanly inspiration, allow me to light my candle by yours!"

I picked it from the hearth, lighted it, and held it close to

her face, laughing, though I never felt less merry. But I had restrained him.

He took the candle from me. "Leave the room," he said to her.

She beckoned to me to go.

"No," he said, "you shall go."

They made a simultaneous movement with their hands,—he to insist, she to deprecate,—and I again remarked how exactly alike they were.

"*Desmond*," I said; "pray, let *me* go."

A deep blush suffused his face. He bowed, and followed me to the foot of the stairs. I reached my hand out for the candle, but he kept both.

"Your pardon."

"For what?"

"For much."

"You are a bad man."

He dropped my hand and turned away.

At the top of the stairs I looked down. He was there, with upturned face, watching me. Whether he went back to confer with his mother, I never knew; if he did, the expression which he wore then must have troubled her. I went to bed, wondering over the mischief that a candle could do. After I had extinguished it, its wick glowed in the dark like a one-eyed demon.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Another week passed. Ben had received a letter from Veronica, informing him that letter-writing was a kind of composition she was not fond of. He must come to her, and then there would be no writing. Her letter exasperated his love. His tenacious mind, lying in wait to close upon hers, was irritated by her simple, and candid behavior. I could give him no consolation; nor did I care to. I was glad that his feelings for her weakened his penetration in regard to me.

When he roused at the expression which he saw Desmond fix upon me the night that Major Millard was there, I expected a rehearsal from him of watchfulness and suspicion; but no symptom appeared. I was glad, for I was in love with Desmond. I had known it from the night of Miss Munster's

party. The morning after, I woke, and knew that my soul had built itself a lordly pleasure-house; its dome and towers were firm and finished, glowing in the light that 'never was on land or sea.' How elate I grew in this atmosphere! The face of Nemesis was veiled even. No eye saw the pure pale nimbus ringed about me. I did not see *him*, except as an apparition. Suddenly he had become the most unobtrusive member of the family, silent and absent. Immunity from espionage was the immutable family rule. Mrs. Somers, under the direction of that spirit who isolated me from all exterior influences, for a little time, had shut down the lid of her evil feelings, and was quiet; watching me, perhaps, but not annoying. Mr. Somers was engaged with the subject of ventilation. Ann, to convince herself that she had a musical talent, practised of afternoons, till she was turned out by Adelaide, who had a fit of reading abtruse works, sometimes seeking me, with fingers thrust between their leaves, to hold abstract conversations, which, though I took small part in them, were of service to me.

That portion of the world of emotions which I was mapping out, she was profoundly indifferent to. My experiences, to her would have been debasing. As she would not come to me, I went to her, and gained something.

Ben, always a favorite with his father, pursued him, rode with him, and made visits of pleasure or business, with a latent object, which kept kept him on the alert.

I had been in Belem three weeks; in a week more I decided to return home. My indignation against Mrs. Somers, from our midnight interview, had not suggested that I should shorten my visit. On the contrary it had freed me from any regard or fear of her opinion. I had discovered her limits.

It was Saturday afternoon. Reflecting that I had but a few days more for Belem, and summing up the events of my visit, and the people I had met—their fashions, and differences, I unrolled a tolerable panorama, with patches in it of vivid color, and laid it away in my memory, to be unrolled again at some future time. Then a faint shadow dropped across my mind, like a curtain—the first that clouded my royal palace, my mental paradise!

I sighed. Joyless, vacant, barren years prefigured themselves to me, drifting through my brain, till their vacant shapes crowded it into darkness. I must do something! I would go out; a walk would be good for me. Moreover, wishing to purchase a parting gift for Adelaide and Ann, I would go alone. Wandering from shop to shop in Norfolk Street, without find-

ing the articles I desired, I turned into a street which crossed it, and found the right shop. I saw Drummond Street, on an old gable-end house. A desire to exchange with some one a language which differed from my thoughts, prompted me to look up Mrs. Hepburn. I soon came to her house, and knocked at the door, which Mari opened. The current was already changed, as I followed her into a room, different from the one where I had seen Mrs. Hepburn. It was dull of aspect, long, and narrow, with one large window, opening on the old-fashioned garden, and from which I saw a discolored marble Flora. Mrs. Hepburn was by the window, in her high chair. She held out her hand, and thanked me for coming to see an old woman. Motioning her head towards a dark corner, she said, "There is a young man who likes occasionally to visit an old woman also."

The young man, twenty-nine years old, was Desmond. He crossed the room, and offered me his hand. We had not spoken since we parted at the stairs, that memorable night. Our eyes met; he hastily brought chairs, and placed them near Mrs. Hepburn, who seized her spectacles, which were on a silk work-bag beside her, scanned us through them, and exclaimed, "Ah ha! what is this?"

"Is it something in me, ma'am?" said Desmond, putting his head before my face, so that it was hid from her.

"Something in both of you; thief! thief!"

She rubbed her frail hand against my sleeve, muttering, "See now, so!—the same characteristics."

I spoke of the difference of the rooms, and said that the one we were in reminded me of a lizard! The walls were faint gray, and every piece of furniture was covered with plain yellow chintz, while the carpet was a pale green. She replied that she always moved from her winter parlor to this summer room on the twenty-second day of April, which had fallen the day before; for she liked to watch the coming out of the shrubs in the garden, which were as old as herself. The chestnut had leaved seventy times, and more; and the crippled plum, whose fruit was too wormy to eat, was dying with age. As for the elms at the bottom of the garden, for all she knew they were a thousand years old.

"The elms are a thousand years old," I repeated and repeated to myself, while she glided from topic to topic with Desmond, whose conversation indicated that he was as cultivated as any ordinary gentleman, when the Pickersgill element was not apparent. The form of the garden-goddess

faded; the sun had gone below the garden wall. The garden grew dusk, and the elms began to nod their tops at me. I became silent, listening to the fall of the plummet, which dropped again and again from the topmost height of that lordly domain, over which shadows had come. Were they sounding its foundations?

My eyes prowled round the garden, seeking with hatred the nucleus of a sensation, which beset me more violently every moment. They found it, in a garden miles away, where nodded another row of elms, under which *Charles Morgeson* stood.

"I am glad you are here, my darling," he said. "Do you smell the roses?"

"Are you going?" I heard Mrs. Hepburn say, in a far-off voice. I was standing by the door.

"Yes, madam; the summer parlor does not delay the sunset."

"Come again. When do you leave Belem?"

"In a few days."

Desmond made a grimace, and went to the window.

"Who returns with you—Ben? He likes piloting."

"I hope he will; I came here for him."

"Pooh! You came here because Mr. Somers had a crochet."

"Well; I was permitted somehow to come."

"It was perfectly right. A woman like you need not question whether a thing is convenable."

Desmond turned from the window, and bestowed upon her a benign smile, which she returned with a satisfied nod.

This implied flattery tinkled pleasantly on my ears, allaying a doubt which I suffered from. Did I realize how much the prestige of those Belem saints influenced me? Or how proud I was with the conviction of affiliation with one who was so plainly marked with Caste?

"Walk with me," he demanded, as we were going down the steps.

"But not far."

We passed out of Drummond Street into a wide open common. Rosy clouds floated across the zenith, and a warm, balmy wind was blowing. I thought of Veronica, calm and happy, as the spring always made her, and the thought was a finishing blow to the variety of moods I had passed through. The helm of my will was broken.

"There is a good view from Moss Hill yonder," he said "Shall we go up?"

I bowed, declining his arm, and trudged beside him. From its summit Belem was only half in sight. Its old, crooked

streets sloped, and disappeared from view; but I saw Wolf's Point to the right of us, and its thread of sea. I began talking of our walk, and was giving an extended description of it, when he abruptly asked why I came to Belem.

"I know," he said, "that you would not have come, had there been any sentiment between you and Ben."

"Thanks for your implication. But I must have made the visit, you know, or how could I learn that I should not have made it?"

"You regret coming?"

"Veronica will give me no thanks."

"Who is she?"

"My sister, whom Ben loves."

"Ben love a sister of yours? My God—how? when first? where? And how came you to meet him?"

"That chapter of accidents need not be recounted. Can you help him?"

"What can I do?" he said roughly. "There is little love between us. You know what a devil's household ours is; but he is one of us—he is afraid."

"Of what?"

"Of mother—of our antecedents—of himself."

"I could not expect you to speak well of him,"

"Of course not. Your sister has no fortune?"

"She has not. Men whose merchandise is ships, are apt to die bankrupt."

"Your father is a merchant?"

"Even at that, the greatest of the name."

"We are all tied up, you know. Ben's allowance is smaller than mine. He is easy about money; therefore he is pa's favorite."

'Why do you not help yourselves?"

"Would you? You have not known us long. Have you influenced Ben to help himself?"

I marched down the hill. Repassing Mrs. Hepburn's, he said, "My grandfather was an Earl's son."

"Mrs. Hepburn likes you for that. My grandfather was a tailor; I should have told her so, when she gave me the aqua marina jewels, because they became me."

"Had you the courage?"

"I forgot it."

I hurried along, for it was dark, and saw Ben on the steps, before us.

"Have you been walking?" he asked

"Yes, with me," answered Desmond. "Won't you give me thanks for attention to your friend?"

"It must have been a whim of Cassandra's."

"Break her of her whims."

"I *will*."

We went into the parlor together, unthinkingly.

"Where do you think I have been?" Ben asked.

"Where?"

"For the doctor. The *baby* is sick;" and he looked hard at Desmond.

"I hope it will live for years and years," I said.

"I know what you are at, Ben," said Desmond. "I have wished the brat dead; but upon my soul, I have a stronger wish than that—I have *forgotten* it."

There was no falseness in his voice; he spoke the truth.

"Forgive me, Des."

"No matter about that," he answered, sauntering off.

I felt happier; that spark of humanity warmed me. I might not have another. "I would," I said, "that the last day, the last moment, of my visit had come. You will only see me henceforth in Surrey. I will live and die there."

"To-night," Ben said, "I am going to tell pa."

"Courage."

"Horrible atmosphere!"

"It would kill Verry."

"You thrive in it," he said, with a spice of irritation in his voice.

"Thrive!"

Adelaide and Ann proved gracious over my little gifts. They were talking of the doctor's visit. Ann said that the child was teething, for she had felt its gums; nothing else was the matter. There need be no *apprehension*. She should say so to Desmond and Ben; and would post a letter to her brother in unknown parts.

"Miss Hiticutt has sent for us to come over to tea," Adelaide informed me. The black silk I wore would do, for we must go at once.

The quiet, formal evening was a pleasant relief, although I was troubled with a desire to inform Mrs. Somers of Ben's engagement, for the sake of exasperating her. We came home too early for bed, Adelaide said; besides, she had a music-hunger. I must sing. Mrs. Somers was by the fire, darning fine napkins, winking over her task, but maintaining in her aspect the determination to avert any danger of a midnight in-

terview with Desmond. That gentleman was at present sleeping on a sofa. I seated myself before the piano, wondering whether he slept from wine, ennui, or to while away the time till I should come. I touched the keys softly, waiting for an interpreting voice, and half unconsciously sang the lines of Schiller:

"I hear the sound of music, and the halls
Are full of light. Who are the revellers?"

Desmond made an inarticulate noise, and sprang up, as if to answer a call. A moment after he stepped quietly over the back of the sofa, and stood bending over me. I looked up. His eyes were clear, his breath pure, his face alive with intuition. Though Adelaide was close by, she was oblivious; her eyes were cast upwards, and her fingers lay languid in her lap. Ann, more lively, introduced a note here and there into my song, to her own satisfaction. Mrs. Somers I could not see; but I stopped, and giving the music stool a turn, faced her. She met me with her pale, opaque stare, and began to swing her foot over her knee; her slipper, already down at her heel, fell off. I picked it up in spite of her negative movement, and hung it on the foot again.

"I shall speak with you presently," she whispered, glancing at Desmond.

He heard her, for he had followed me as far as the hearth, and his face flashed with the instinct of sport, which made me ashamed of my desire for a struggle with her.

I said "Good night," abruptly, looking at the girls.

"We are all sleepy, except this exemplary housewife, with her napkins," said Ann. "We will all go."

"How well you look!" said Adelaide.

Ann elevated her candle to examine me.

"Your eyes are almost as dark as your eyebrows, and shine like a cat's."

"Hiticutts' tea was too strong," said Adelaide; "your pupils are dilated with nervousness. I am sorry you are going home," and she kissed me. At any other time such a favor would have astonished me; but now I rejoiced to see her depart. I sat down by the toilet table, and was arranging some bottles, when Mrs. Somers rustled in. Out of breath, she began haughtily:

"What do you mean?"

A lethargic feeling crept over me; my thoughts wandered into a shapeless void.

She pulled my sleeve violently.

"If you touch me, I think it will rouse me. Did a child of yours ever inflict a blow upon you?"

She turned purple with rage, looming up before my far off vision like a peony.

"When are you going home?"

I counted aloud, "Sunday—Monday," and stopped at Wednesday. "Ben is going back with me."

"*He* may go."

"And not Desmond?"

"Do you know Desmond?"

"Not entirely."

"He has always played with such toys as you are, and has broken them."

"Alas, he is hereditarily cruel! Could *I* expect not to be broken?"

She caught up a glass goblet, to throw it, but she only grasped it so tight that it shivered. "There goes one of the Pickersgill treasures, I am sure," I thought.

"I am already scarred, you see. I have been 'nurtured in convulsions.'"

The action seemed to loosen her speech; but she had to nerve herself to say what she had intended; for some reason or other, she could not remain as angry as she wished. What she said, I will not repeat.

"Madam, I have no plans. If I have a Purpose, it is formless yet. If God saves us, what can you do?"

She made a gesture of contempt.

"You have no soul to thank me, for what may be my work."

And I opened the door.

Ben stood on the threshold.

"In God's name, what is this?"

I pointed to his mother. She looked uneasy, and stepping forward, put her hand on his arm; but he shook her off.

"You may well call me a fool, Cassandra, for bringing you here," he said in a bitter voice; "besides calling me cruel for subjecting you to these ordeals. I knew how it would be with mother. What is it, madam?" he asked imperiously, looking so much like her, that I shuddered.

"It is not you she is after," she hotly exclaimed.

"No, I should think not." And he led her out swiftly.

I heard Mrs. Somers say, at breakfast, as I went in, "We are to lose Miss Cassandra on Wednesday." I looked at Desmond, who was munching toast abstractedly. He made a motion for me to take the chair beside him, which I obeyed. Ben

saw this movement, and an expression of pain passed across his face. At that instant I remembered that Desmond's being seen in the evening and in the morning, was a rare occurrence. Mr. Somers took up the remark of Mrs. Somers, where she had left it, and expatiated on it till breakfast was over, so courteously and so ramblingly, that I was convinced the affair Ben had at heart had been revealed. He invited me to go to church, and he spent the whole of the evening in the parlor; and although Desmond hovered near me all day, and all the evening, we had no opportunity of speaking to each other.

CHAPTER XXXII.

On Tuesday morning Adelaide sent out invitations to a farewell entertainment, as she called it, for Tuesday evening. Mrs. Somers, affecting great interest in it, engaged my services in wiping the dust from glass and china; "too valuable," she said, "for servants to handle." We spent a part of the morning in the dining-room and pantry. Ann was with us. If she went out, Mrs. Somers was silent; when present she chatted. While we were busy Desmond came in, in riding trousers, and whip in hand.

"What nonsense!" he said, touching my hand with the whip lash. "Will you ride with me after dinner?"

"I must have the horses at three o'clock," said his mother, "to go to Mrs. Flint's funeral. She was a family friend, you know." The funeral could not be postponed, even for Desmond; but he grew ill-humored at once, swore at Murphy, who was packing a waiter at the sideboard, for rattling the plates; called Ann a minx, because she laughed at him; and bit a cigar to pieces, because he could not light it. Rash had followed him, his nose against his velveteens, in intreaty to go with him; I was pleased at this sign of amity between them. At a harder push than common he looked down, and kicked him away.

"Noble creature," I said, "try your whip on him. Rash, go to your master," and I opened the door. Two smaller dogs, Desmond's property, made a rush to come in; but I shut them out, whereat they whined so loudly, that Mrs. Somers was provoked to attack him for bringing his dogs in the house. An altercation took place, and was ended by Desmond's declaring that he was on his way after a bitch terrier, to bring

it home. He went out, giving me a look from the door, which I answered with a smile, that made him stamp all the way through the hall. Mrs. Somers's feelings, as she heard him, peeped out at me. Groaning in spirit, I finished my last saucer, and betook myself to my room and read, till summoned by Mrs. Somers to a consultation respecting the furniture coverings. Desmond came home, but spoke to no one, hovering in my vicinity as on the day before.

In the afternoon Adelaide and I went in the carriage to make calls upon those we did not expect to see in the evening. She wrote P.P.C. on my cards, and laughed at the idea of paying farewell visits to strangers. The last one was made to Mrs Hepburn. A soft melancholy crept over me when I entered the room where I had met Desmond last. We should probably not see each other alone again. Mrs. Somers's policy to that effect would be a success, for I should make no opposition to it. Not a word of my feelings could I speak to Mrs. Hepburn —Adelaide was there—provided I had the impulse ; and Mrs. Hepburn would be the last to forgive me, should I make the conventional mistake of a scene, or an aside. This old lady had taught me something. I went to the window, curious to know whether any nerve of association would vibrate again. Nothing stirred me ; the machinery which had agitated and controlled me, was effete.

Mrs. Hepburn said as we were taking leave :

" If you come to Belem next year, and I am above the sod, I invite you to pass a month with me. But let it be in the summer. I ride then, and should like you for a companion."

She might have seen irresolution in me, for she added quickly, " You need not promise—let time decide," and shook my hands kindly.

" Hep is smitten with you, in her selfish way," Adelaide remarked, as we rode from the door. She ordered the coachman to drive home by the ' Leslie House,' which she wanted me to see. A great aunt had lived and died there, leaving the house—one of the oldest in Belem—to her brother Ned.

" Who is he like ?"

" Desmond ; but worse. There's only a year's difference in their ages. They were educated together ; kept in the nursery till they were great boys and tyrants, and then sent abroad. They were in Amiens three years "

" There are Desmond and Ben ; they are walking in the street we are passing."

She looked out.

"They are quarrelling, I dare say. Ben is a prig, and preaches to Des."

While we were in the house, and Adelaide talked with the old servant of her aunt, my thoughts were occupied with Desmond. What had they quarrelled on? Desmond was pale, and laughed;—but Ben was red, and looked angry.

"Why do you look at me so fixedly?" Adelaide asked, when we were in the carriage again.

It was on my tongue to say, "Because I am beset." I did not, however, but instead I asked her if she never noticed what a rigid look people wore in their best bonnets, and holding a card-case? She said, "Yes," and shook out her handkerchief, as if to correct her own rigidity.

After an early tea she compelled me to sing, and we delayed dressing till Mrs. Somers bloomed in, with purple satin, and feather head-dress.

"Now we must go," she said.

"What shall you wear?" Mrs. Somers asked, advising a certain ugly, claret-colored silk.

"Be sure not," said Adelaide on the stairs. "That dress makes your hair too yellow."

I heard loud laughing in the third story, and heavy steps, while I was in my room; and when I went down, I saw two gentlemen in evening dress, standing by Desmond, at the piano, and singing, "*Fill, fill the sparkling brimmer.*" They were, as Ann informed me, college friends of Des, who had arrived for a few days' visit, she supposed; disagreeable persons, of course. They were often in Belem to ride, fish, or play billiards. "Pa hates them," she said in conclusion. Mr. Somers entering at this moment, in his diplomatique style, his gouty white hands shaded with wristbands, and his throat tied with a white cravat, appeared to contradict her assertion, he was so affable in his salutations to the young men. Desmond turned from the piano when he heard his father's voice, and caught sight of me. He started towards me; but his attention was claimed by one of the gentlemen, who had been giving me a prolonged stare, and he dropped back on his seat, with an indifferent air, answering some question relating to myself. He looked as when I first saw him—flushed, haughty, and bored. His hair and dress were disordered, his boots splashed with mud; and it was evident that he did not intend to appear at the party.

I was called by Adelaide to remain by her; but I slipped away when I thought no more would arrive, and sought a retired corner, to which Mr. Somers brought Desmond's

friends, introducing them as the sons of his college chums, and leaving them, one lolling against the mantel, the other over the back of a chair. They were muzzy with drink, and seemed to grow warm, as I looked from one to the other, with an attentive air.

"You are visiting in Belem," said one.

"That is true," I replied.

"It is too confoundedly aristocratic for me; it knocks Beacon Street into nothingness."

"Where is Beacon Street?"

"Don't you know *that?* Nor the Mall?"

"No."

Our conversation was interrupted by Ben, whom I had not seen since the day before. He had been out of town, transacting some business for his father. We looked at each other without speaking, but divined each other's thoughts. "You *are* as true and noble, as I think you are lovely. I must have it so. You *shall not* thwart me." "Faithful and good Ben,—do you pass a sufficiently strict examination upon yourself? Are you not disposed to carry through your own ideas without considering *me?*" Whatever our internal comments were, we smiled upon each other with the sincerity of friendship, and I detected Mr. Digby in the act of elevating his eyebrows at Mr. Devereaux, who signified his opinion by telegraphing back: "It is all over with them."

"Hey, Somers," said the first; "what are you doing now-a-days?"

"Pretty much the same work that I always have on hand."

"Do you mean to stick to Belem?"

"No."

"I thought so. But what has come over Des, lately? He is spoony."

"He is going backward, may be, to some course he omitted in his career with you fellows. We must run the same round somehow, you know."

"He'll not find much reason for it, when he arrives," Mr. Devereaux said.

Miss Munster joined us, with the intention of breaking up our conclave, and soon moved away, with Mr. Digby and Devereaux in her train.

"I have changed my mind," said Ben, "about going home with you."

"Are your plans growing complicated again?"

"Can you go to Surrey alone?"

"Why not, pray?"

"I have an idea of going to Switzerland to spend the summer. Will Veronica be ready in the autumn?"

"How can I answer? Shall you not take leave of her?"

"Perhaps. Yes,—I must," he said excitedly; "but to-morrow we will talk more about it. I shall go to Boston with you; pa is going, too How well you look to-night, Cassy! What sort of dress is this?" taking up a fold of it. "Is it cotton-silk, or silk-cotton? It is soft and light. How delicate you are, with your gold hair, and morning-glory eyes!"

"How poetical! My dress is new, and was made by Adelaide's dress-maker."

"Mother beckons me. What a head-dress that is, of hers!"

"What beckons you to go to Switzerland?" I mused.

I listened for Desmond's voice, which would have sounded like a silver bell, in the loud, coarse buzz which pervaded the rooms. All the women were talking shrill, and the men answering in falsetto. He was not among them, and I moved to and fro unnoticed, for the tide of entertainment had set in, and I could withdraw, if I chose. I took a chair near an open door, and commanded a view into a small room, on the other side of the hall, opened only on occasions like these; there was no one in it. Perceiving that my shoe-lace was untied, I stooped to re-fasten it, and when I looked in the room again, saw Desmond standing under the chandelier, his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the floor, and his hair disordered, and falling over his forehead—its blackness was intense against the relief of the crimson wall-paper. Was it that which had unaccountably changed his appearance?

He raised his head, looked across the hall, and saw me.

"Come here," he signalled. I rose like an automaton, and cast an involuntary glance about me; the guests were filing through the drawing room, into the room where refreshments were laid. When the last had gone, I left the friendly protection of the niche by the fire place. I stood so near him, that I saw his nostrils quiver,—splendid animal that he was! Then there came into his face an expression of pain, which made it intellectual. I had wished him to please me; *now* I wished to please him. It seemed that he had no intention of speaking, and that he had called me to him, to witness a struggle, which I must find a key to hereafter, in the depths of my own heart. I watched him in silence, and it passed. He pushed the door to with his foot, and the movement caused something to swing and glitter against his breast—a ring on his watch ribbon,

smaller than I could wear, a woman's ruby ring. The small, feminine imp, who abides with those who have beams in their eyes, and helps them to extract motes from the eyes of others, inspired me. I pointed to the ring. Dropping his eyes, he said: "I loved her shamefully, and she loved me shamefully. When shall I take it off—cursed sign?" And he snapped it with his thumb and finger.

I grew rigid with virtue.

"You may not conjure up any tragic ideas on the subject. She is no outcast. She is here to-night; if there was ruin, it was mutual."

"And your other faults?"

"Ah!" he said with a terrible accent, "we shall see."

There was a tap on the door; it was Ben's. I fell back a step, and he came in. "Will you bring Cassandra to the supper room?" he said, turning pale.

"No."

"Come with me, then; you must." And he put my arm in his.

"Hail, and farewell, Cassandra!" said Desmond, standing before the door. "Give me your hand."

I gave him both my hands. He kissed one, and then the other, and moved to let us pass out. But Ben did not go; he fumbled for his handkerchief to wipe his forehead, on which stood beads of sweat.

"Allons, Ben," I said.

"Go on, go on," said Desmond, holding the door wide open.

A painful curiosity made me anxious to discover the owner of the ruby ring! The friendly, but narrow-minded imp I have spoken of, composed speeches, with which I might assail her, should she be found. I looked in vain at every woman present; there was not a sorrowful or guilty face among them. Another feeling took the place of my curiosity. I forgot the woman I was seeking, to remember the love I bore Desmond. I was mad for the sight of him; mad to touch his hand once more. I could have put the asp on my breast to suck me to sleep, as Cleopatra did; but *Cæsar* was there. He staid by me till the lights were turned down.

Digby and Devereaux were commenting on Desmond's disappearance, and Mrs. Somers was politely yawning, waiting their call for candles.

"If you are to accompany me, Ben," I said, "now is the time." And we slipped out. He preserved a determined silence. I shook him, and said—"*Veronica.*" He put his

hand over my mouth with an indignant look, which was lost upon me, for I whispered in his ear: "Do you know now that I *love* Desmond?"

"Will you bring him into our Paradise?"

"Where?"

"Our home, in Surrey."

"Won't an angel with a flaming sword make it piquant?"

"If you marry Desmond Somers," he said austerely, "you will contradict three lives,—yours, mine, and Veronica's. What beast was it, that suggested this horrible discord? Have you so much passion, that you cannot discern the future you offer yourself?"

"Imperator, you have an agreeable way of putting things. But they are coming through the hall. Good night."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

At eleven o'clock the next day I was ready for departure. All stood by the open hall door, criticising Murphy's strapping of my trunk on a hack. Messrs. Digby and Devereaux, in black satin scarfs, hung over the step railings; Mrs. Somers, Adelaide, and Ann were within the door. Mr. Somers and Ben were already on the walk, waiting for me; so I went through the ceremony of bidding good bye—a ceremony performed with so much cheerfulness on all sides, that it was an occasion for well-bred merriment, and I made my exit, as I should have made it in a genteel comedy, but with a bitter feeling of mortification, because, finding it impossible to break down their artificial, wilful imperturbability, with any genuineness, I was forced to oppose them with manners copied after their own.

I looked from the carriage window for a last view of my room. The chambermaid was already there, and had thrown open the shutters, to let in daylight upon the scene of the most royal dreams I had ever had. The ghost of my individuality would lurk there no longer than the chairs I had placed, the books I had left, the shreds of paper, or flowers I had scattered, could be moved, or swept away.

All the way to Boston the transition to my old condition oppressed me. I felt a dreary disgust at the necessity of resuming relations which had no connection with the sentiment

that bound me to Belem. After we were settled at the Tremont, while watching a sad waiter engaged in the ceremonial of folding napkins like fans, I discovered an intermediate tone of mind, which gave my thoughts a picturesque tinge. My romance, its regrets, and its pleasures, should be set in the frame of the wild sea and shores of Surrey. I invested our isolated house with the dignity of a stage, where the drama which my thoughts must continually represent, could go on without interruption, and remain a secret I should have no temptation to reveal. Until after the tedious dinner, a complete rainbow of dreams spanned the arc of my brain. Mr. Somers dispersed it by asking Ben to go out on some errand. That it was a pretext, I knew by Ben's expression; therefore, when he had gone, I turned to Mr. Somers an attentive face. First, he circumlocuted; second, he skirmished. I still waited for what he wished to say, without giving him any aid. He was sure, he said, at last, that my visit in his family had convinced me, that his children could not vary the destiny imposed upon them by their antecedents, without bringing upon *others* lamentable consequences. "Cunning pa," I commented internally. Had I not seen the misery of unequal marriages?

"As in a glass, darkly."

Doubtless, he went on, I had comprehended the erratic tendency in *Ben's* character, good and honorable as he was, but impressive and visionary. Did I think so?

"Quite the contrary. Have you never perceived the method of his visions in an unvarying opposition to those antecedents you boast of?"

"Well, *well*, well?"

"Money, Family, Influence,—are a ding-dong bell which you must weary of, Mr. Somers—sometimes."

"Ben has disappointed me; I must confess that."

"My sister is eccentric. Provided she marries him, the family programme will be changed. You must lop him from the family tree."

He took up a paper, bowed to me with an unvexed air, and read a column or so.

"It may be absurd," and he looked over his spectacle tops, as if he had found the remark in his paper, "for parents to oppose the marriages their children choose to make, and I beg you to understand that I may *oppose*, not *resist* Ben. You know very well," and he dropped the paper in a burst of irritation and candor, "that the devil will be to pay with Mrs

Somers, who has a right of dictation in the affair. She does not suspect it. I must say that Ben is mistaking himself again. I mean, I think so."

I looked upon him with a more friendly countenance. The one rude word he had spoken had a wonderful effect, after the surprise of it was over. Real eyes appeared in his face, and a truthful accent pervaded his voice. I think he was beginning to think that he might confide his perplexities to me on other subjects, when Ben returned. As it was, a more friendly feeling had been established between us. He said in a confidential tone to Ben, as if we were partners in some guilty secret, "You must mention it to your mother; indeed you must."

"You have been speaking with Cassandra, in reference to her sister," he answered indifferently. Mr. Somers was chilled in his attempt at a mutual confidence.

"Can you raise money, if Desmond should marry? Enough for both of us?"

"Desmond? he will never marry."

"It is certainly possible."

"You know how I am clogged."

I rang for some ice water, and when the waiter brought it, said that it was time for me to retire.

"I shall give you just such a breakfast as will enable you to travel well—a beef-steak, and old bread made into toast. Don't drink that ice water; take some wine."

I set the glass of ice water down, and declined the wine. Ben elevated his eyebrows.

"What time shall I get up, sir?"

"I will call you; so you may sleep untroubled."

He opened the door, and bade me an affectionate good night.

"The coach is ready," a waiter announced, before we had finished our breakfast. "We are ready," said Mr. Somers. "I have ordered a packet of sandwiches for you—*beef*, not ham sandwiches—and here is a flask of wine mixed with water."

I thanked him, and tied my bonnet.

"Here is a note, also," opening his pocket book, and extracting it, "for your father. It contains our apologies for not accompanying you, and one or two allusions," making an attempt to wink at Ben, which failed, his eyes being unused to such an undignified style of humor.

He excused himself from going to the station on account of the morning air, and Ben and I proceeded. In the passage, the waiter met us with a paper box. "For you, Miss. A

florist's boy just left it." I opened it in the coach, and seeing flowers, was about to take them out to show Ben, when I caught sight of the ribbon which tied them—a piece of one of my collar knots I had not missed. Of course the flowers came from Desmond, and half the ribbon was in his possession; the ends were jagged, as if it had been divided with a knife. Instead of taking out the flowers, I showed him the box.

"What a curious boquet," he said.

In the cars he put into my hand a jewel box, and a thick letter for Verry, kissed me, and was out of sight.

"No vestige but these flowers," uncovering them again. "In my room at Surrey, I will take you out," and I shut the box. The clanking of the car wheels revolved through my head in rhythm, excluding thought for miles. Then I looked out at the flying sky—it was almost May. The day was mild and fair; in the hollows, the young grass spread over the earth like a smooth cloth; over the hills, and unsheltered fields, the old grass lay like coarse mats. A few birds roved the air in anxiety, for the time of love was at hand, and their nests were not finished. By twelve I arrived at the town where the railroad branched in a direction opposite the road to Surrey, and where a stage was waiting for its complement of passengers from the cars. I was the only lady 'aboard,' as one of the passengers intelligently remarked, when we started. They were desirable companions, for they were gruff to each other, and silent to me. We rode several miles in a state of unadjustment, and then yielded to the sedative qualities of a stage-coach. I lunched on my sandwiches, thanking Mr. Somers for his forethought, though I should have preferred them of ham, instead of beef. When I took a sip from my flask, two men looked surprised, and spit vehemently out of the windows. I offered it to them. They refused it, saying they had had what was needful at the Dépot Saloon, conducted on the strictest Temperance principles.

"Those principles are cruel, provided travellers ever have colics, or an aversion to Dépot tea and coffee," I said.

There was silence for the space of fifteen minutes, then one of them turned and said, "You have a good head, marm."

"Too good?"

"Forgetful, may be."

I bowed, not wishing to prolong the conversation.

"Your circulation is too rapid," he continued.

The man on the seat with him now turned round, and exam

ining me, informed him that electricity would be first rate for me.

"Shoo!" he replied, "it's a humbug."

I was forgotten in the discussion which followed, and which lasted till our arrival at a village, where one of them resided. He left, telling us he was a "natral bone setter." One by one the passengers left the stage, and for the last five miles I was alone. I beguiled the time by elaborating a multitude of trivial opinions, suggested by objects I saw along the roadside, till the old and new church spires of Surrey came in sight, and the curving lines at either ends of the ascending shores. We reached the point in the north road, where the ground began its descent to the sea, and I hung from the window, to see all the village roofs humble before it. The streets and dwellings looked as insignificant as those of a toy village. I perceived no movement in it; heard no hum of life. At a cross road, which would take the stage into the village without its passing our house, a whim possessed me. I would surprise them at home, and go in at the back door, while they were expecting to hear the stage. The driver let me out, and I stood in the road till he was out of sight.

A breeze blew round me, penetrating, but silent; the fields, and the distant houses which dotted them, were asleep in the pale sunshine, undisturbed by it. The crows cawed, and flew over the eastern woods. I walked slowly. The road was deserted. Mrs. Crossman's house was the only one I must pass; its shutters were closed, and the yard was empty. As I drew near home a violent haste grew upon me, yet my feet seemed to impede my progress. They were like lead; I impelled myself along, as in a dream. Under the protection of our orchard wall I turned my merino mantle, which was lined with an indefinite color, spread my vail over my bonnet, and bent my shoulders, and passed down the carriage-drive, by the dining-room windows, into the stable yard. The rays of sunset struck the lantern-panes in the light house, and gave the atmosphere a yellow stain. The pigeons were skimming up and down the roof of the wood-house, and cooing round the horses that were in the yard. A boy was driving cows into the shed, whistling a lively air; he suspended it when he saw me, but I shook my finger at him, and ran in. Slipping into the side hall, I dropped my bonnet and shawl, and listened at the door for the familiar voices. Mother must be there, as was her wont, and aunt Mercy. All of them, perhaps, for I had seen nobody on my way. There was no talking within. The last sunset-

ray struck on my hand its yellow shade, through the fan-light, and faded before I opened the door. I was arrested on the threshold, by a silence, which rushed upon me, and clutched me in a suffocating embrace. Mother was in her chair by the fire, which was out, for the brands were black, and one had fallen close to her feet. A white flannel shawl covered her shoulders; her chin rested on her breast. "She is ill, and has dropped asleep." And I thrust my hands out, through this terrible silence, to break her slumber, and looked at the clock; it was near seven A door slammed, somewhere up stairs, so loud it made me jump; but she did not wake. I went towards her, confused, and stumbling against the table which was between us, but I reached her at last. Oh, I knew it! She was dead! People must die, even in their chairs, alone! What difference did it make, how? An empty cup was in her lap, bottom up; I set it carefully on the mantel shelf above her head. Her handkerchief was crumpled in her nerveless hand; I drew it away and thrust it into my bosom. My gloves tightened my hands so, I tried to pull them off, and was tugging at them, when a door opened, and Veronica came in.

"She is dead," I said. "I can't get them off."

"It is false;" and she staggered backwards, with her hand on her heart, till she fell against the wall. I do not know how long we remained so, but I became aware of a great confusion —cries, and exclamations; people were running in and out. Fanny rolled on the floor in hysterics.

"Get up," I said. "I can't move; help me. Where did Verry go?"

She got up, and pulled me along. I saw father raise mother in his arms. The dreadful sight of her swaying arms and drooping head made me lose my breath; but Veronica forced me to endurance, by clinging to me, and dragging me out of the room and up stairs. She turned the key of the glass-door at the head of the passage, not letting go of me. I took her by the arms, placed her in a chair, and closing my window curtains, sat down beside her in the dark.

"Where will they carry her?" she asked, shuddering, and putting her fingers in her ears. "How the water splashes on the beach! Is the tide coming in?"

She was appalled by the physical horror of death, and asked me incessant questions.

"Let us keep her away from the grave," she said.

I could not answer, or hear her at last, for sleep overpowered me. I struggled against it, in vain. It seemed the great

est good ; let death and judgment come, I must sleep. I threw myself on my bed, and the touch of the pillow sealed my eyes. I started from a dream about something that happened when I was a little child. "Veronica, are you here ?"

"Mother is dead," she answered.

A mighty anguish filled my breast. Mother !—her goodness and beauty, her pure heart, her simplicity—I felt them all. I pitied her dead, because she would never know that I valued her. Veronica shed no tear, but she sighed heavily. *Duty* sounded through her sighs. "Verry, shall *I* take care of you? I think I can." She shook her head; but presently she stretched her hands in search of my face, kissed it, and answered, "Perhaps."

"You must go to your own room, and rest."

"Can you keep everybody from me ?"

"I will try."

Opening her window, she looked out over the earth wistfully, and at the sky, thickly strewn with stars, which revealed her face. We heard somebody coming up the back stairs.

"Temperance," said Verry.

"Are you in the dark, girls ?" she asked, wringing her hands, when she had put down her lamp. "What an awful Providence !" She looked with a painful anxiety at Veronica.

"It is all Providence, Temperance, whether we are alive, or dead," I said. "Let us let Providence alone."

"What did I ever leave her for ? She wasn't fit to take care of herself. Why, Cassandra Morgeson, you haven't got off all your things yet. And what's this, sticking out of your bosom ?"

"It is her handkerchief." I kissed it, and now Verry began to weep over it, begging me for it. I gave it up to her.

"It will kill your father."

I had not thought of him.

"It's most nine o'clock. Sofrony Beals is here ; she lays out beautifully."

"No, no ; don't let anybody touch her !" shrieked Verry.

"No, they shan't. Come into the kitchen ; you must have something to eat."

I was faint from the want of food, and when Temperance prepared us something I ate heartily. Veronica drank a little milk, but would taste nothing. Aunt Merce, who had been out to tea, Temperance said, came into the kitchen.

"My poor girl, I have not seen you," embracing me, half blind with crying, "How pale you are ! How sunken ! Keep

up as well as you can. I little thought that the worthless one of us two would be left to suffer. Go to your father, as soon as possible."

"Drink this tea right down, Mercy," said Temperance, holding a cup before her. "There isn't much to eat in the house. Of all times in the world to be without good victuals! What could Hepsey have meant?"

"Poor old soul," aunt Merce replied, "she is quite broken. Fanny had to help her up stairs."

The kitchen door opened, and Temperance's husband, Abram, came in.

"Good Lord!" she said in an irate voice, "have you come, too? Did you think I couldn't get home to get your breakfast?"

She hung the kettle on the fire again, muttering too low for him to hear: "Some folks could be spared better than other folks."

Abram shoved back his hat. "'The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away,' but she is a dreadful loss to the poor. There's my poor boy, whose clothes"—

"Ain't he the beatum of all the men that ever you see?" broke in Temperance, taking to him a large piece of pie, which he took with a short laugh, and sat down to eat. I could not help exchanging a look with aunt Merce; we both laughed. Veronica, lost in revery, paid no attention to anything about her. I saw that Temperance suffered for her; she was perplexed and irritated.

"Let Abram stay, if he likes," I whispered to her; "and be sure to stay yourself, for you are needed."

She brightened with an expression of gratitude. "He is a nuisance," she whispered back; "but as I made a fool of myself, I must be punished according to my folly. I'll stay, you may depend. I'll do *everything* for you. I vow I am mad, that I ever went away."

"Have the neighbors gone?" I asked.

"There's a couple or so round, and will be, you know. I'll take Verry to bed, and sleep on the floor by her. You go to your father."

He was in their bed-room, lying on their bed, which had been stripped bare. She was lying on a frame of wood, covered with canvas—a kind of bed which went from house to house in Surrey, on occasions of sickness, or death.

"Our last night together has passed," he said in a tremulous voice, while scanty tears fell from his seared eyes. "The

space between then and now—when her arm was round me, when she slept beside me, when I woke from a bad dream, and she talked gently, close to my face, till I slept again—is so narrow, that I recall it with a sense of reality which agonizes me: it is so immeasurable when I see her there—*there*, that I am crushed."

If I had had any thought of speaking to him, it was gone. And I must go too. Were the hands folded across her breast, where I, also, had slept? Were the blue eyes closed, that had watched me there? I should never see. A shroud covered her from all eyes but his now. Till I closed the door upon him, I looked my last farewell. An elderly woman met me as I was going up stairs, and offered me a small packet; it was her hair. "It was very long," she said I tried to thank her, but was deadly sick. "I will place it in a drawer for you," she said, kindly.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The house was thronged until after the funeral. We sat in state, to be condoled with, and waited upon. Not a jot of the customary rites was abated, though I am sure the performers thereof had small encouragement. Veronica alone would see no one. Her room was the only one not invaded; for the neighbors took the house into their hands, assisted by that part of the Morgesons, who were too distantly related to consider themselves as mourners to be shut up with us. It was put under rigorous funeral law, and inspected from garret to cellar. They supervised all the arrangements, if there were any that they did not make; received the guests who came from a distance, and aided their departure. Every child in Surrey was allowed to come in, to look at the dead, with the idle curiosity of childhood. Veronica knew nothing of this. Her course was taken for granted; mine was imposed upon me. I remonstrated with Temperance, but she replied that it was all well meant, and always done. I endured the same annoyances over and over again, from relays of people. Bed-time especially was their occasion. I was not allowed to undress alone I must have drinks, either to compose, or stimulate; I must have something read to me; I must be watched when I slept, or I must be kept awake to give advice, or be told items of news. All

the while, like a chorus, they reiterated the character, the peculiarities, the virtues of the mother I had lost, who could never be replaced—who was in a better world. However, I was, in a measure, kept from myself, during this interval. The matter is often subservient to the manner. Arthur's feelings were played upon also. He wept often, confiding to me his grief, and his plans for the future. "If people would die at the age of seventy-five, things would go well," he said, "for everybody must expect to die then; the Bible says so." He informed me also, that he expected to be an architect, and that mother liked it. He had an idea, which he had imparted to her, of an arch; it must be made of black marble, with gold veins, and ought to stand in Egypt, with the word '*Pandemonium*' on it. The kitchen was the focus of interest to him, for meals were prepared at all hours for comers and goers. Temperance told me, that the 'mild and indifferent mourners were fond of good victuals, and she thought their hearts were lighter than their stomachs when they went away.' She presided there, and wrangled with Fanny, who seemed to have lost her capacity for doing anything steadily, except, as Temperance said, where father was concerned. "It's a pity she isn't his dog; she might keep at his feet then. I found her crying awfully yesterday, because he looked so grief-struck."

Aunt Merce was engaged with a dressmaker, and with the orders for bonnets and vails. She discussed the subject of the mourning with the Morgesons. I acquiesced in all her arrangements, for she derived a simple comfort from these external tokens. Veronica refused to wear the bonnet and vail, and the required bombazine. Bombazine made her flesh crawl. Why should she wear it? Mother hated it, too, for she had never worn out the garments made for grand'ther Warren.

"She's a bigger child than ever," Temperance remarked, "and must have her way."

"Do you think the border of my cap is too deep?" asked aunt Merce, coming into my room dressed for the funeral.

"No."

"The cap came from Miss Nye in Milford; she says they wear them so. I could have made it myself for half the price. Shall you be ready soon? I am going to put on my bonnet. The yard is full of carriages already."

"If mother's soul should return," I thought, "she would find herself a stranger; her dead body has taken its place."

Somebody handed me my gloves; my bonnet was tied my handkerchief given to me, and the door opened. In the pas-

sage I heard a knocking from Veronica's room, and crossed to learn what she wanted.

"Is this like her?" she asked, showing me a drawing.

"How could you have done this?"

"Because I have tried. *Is* it like?"

"Yes, the idea."

But what a picture she had attempted to make! Mother's shadowy face serenely looked from a high small window, set in clouds, like those which gather over the sun when it 'draws water.' It was closely pressed to the glass, and she was regarding dark, indefinite, creeping creatures below it, which Veronica either could not, or would not, shape.

"Keep it; but don't work on it any more." And I put it away. She was wan and languid, but collected.

"She is fifty-three years old, and you are twenty-five."

"I know it."

"I see you are ready. Somebody must bury the dead. Go. Will the house be left empty?"

"Yes."

"Good; I can walk through it once more."

"The dead must be buried, that is certain; but why should it be certain that *I* must be the one to do it?"

"You think I can go through with it then."

"I have set your behavior down to your will."

"You may be right. Perhaps mother was always right about me too; she was against me."

I was called in a suppressed voice.

She looked at me with a timidity and apprehension that made my heart bleed.

"I think we might kiss each other *now*," she said.

I opened my arms, holding her against my breast so fiercely, that she drew back embarrassed; but she kissed my cheek gently, adjusted my shawl, took from her pocket a flaçon of salts, which she fastened to my belt by its little chain, and said again, "Go;" but recalling me, said, "One thing more; I will never lose temper with you again."

The landing-stair was full of people. I locked the door, and took out the key; the stairs were crowded. All made way for me with a silent respect. Aunt Merce, when she saw me, put her hand on an empty chair beside father, who sat by the coffin. Those passages in the Bible which contain the beautifully poetic images relating to the going of man to his long home, were read, and to my ear they seemed to fall on the coffin in dull strife with its inmate, who mutely contradicted them. A

discourse followed, which was calculated to harrow the feelings to the utmost. Arthur began to cry so nervously, that some considerate friend took him out, and aunt Merce wept so violently that she grew faint, and caught hold of me, I gave her the flaçon of salts, which revived her; but I felt as father looked—stern, and anxious to escape the unprofitable trial.

As the coffin was taken out to the hearse, my heart twisted and palpitated, as if a command had been laid upon it to follow, and not leave her. I was imprisoned in the cage of Life. The Keeper would not let me go; her, he had let loose.

We were still obliged to sit an intolerable while, till all present had passed before her for the last time. When the hearse moved down the street, father, Arthur, and I were called, and assisted into our own chaise, as if we were helpless; the reins were put in father's hands, and the horse was led behind the hearse. At last the word was given, and the long procession began to move through the street, which was deserted. A cat ran out of a house, and scampered across the way; Arthur laughed, and father jumped nervously at the sound of his laugh.

The grave-yard was a mile outside the village—a sandy plain, where a few stunted pines transplanted from the woods near it struggled to keep alive. As we turned from the street into the lane which led to it, and rode up a little hill where the sand was so deep it muffled the wheels and feet of the horses, the whole round of the gray sky was visible. It hung low over us. I wished it to drop, and blot out the vague nothings under it. We left the carriage at the palings, and walked up the narrow path, among the mounds, where every stone was marked—"Morgeson." Some so old they were stained with blotches of yellow moss, slanting backwards and forwards, in protest against the folly of indicating what was no longer beneath them. The mounds were covered with mats of scanty, tangled grass, with here and there a rank spot of green. I was tracing the shape of one of these green patches, when I felt father's arm tremble. I shut my eyes, but could not close my ears to the sound of the spadefull of sand which fell on the coffin.

It was over. We must leave her to the creeping creatures Veronica had seen. I looked upwards, to discern the shadowy reflection behind the gray haze of cloud, where she might have paused a moment on her eternal journey to the eternal world of souls.

It was the custom, and father took off his hat to thank his friends for their sympathy and attention. His lips moved, but no words were audible.

The procession moved down the path again. Arthur's hand was in mine; he stamped his feet firmly on the sand, as if to break the oppressive silence which no one seemed disposed to disturb. The same ceremonies were performed in starting us homeward, by the same person, who let go the reins, and lifted his hat as we passed, as the final token of attention and respect.

The windows were open; a wind was blowing through the house, the furniture was set in order, the doors were thrown back, but not a soul was there when we went in. The duties of friendship and tradition had been fulfilled; the neighbors had gone home to their avocations. For the public, the tragedy was over; all speculation on the degree of our grief, or our indifference, was settled. We could take off our mourning garments, and our mourning countenances, now that we were alone; or we could give way to that anguish we are afraid and ashamed to show, except before the One above human emotion.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Temperance staid to the house-cleaning. It was lucky, she could not help saying, as house-cleaning must always be after a funeral, that it should have happened at the regular cleaning-time. She went back to her own house as soon as it was over. Father drove to Milford as usual; Arthur resumed his school, and aunt Merce, who had at first busied herself in looking over her wardrobe, and selecting from it what she thought could be dyed, folded it away. She passed hours in mother's room from which father had fled, crying over her Bible, looking in her boxes and drawers to feed her sorrow with the sight of the familiar things, alternating those periods with her old occupation of looking out of the windows. In regard to myself and Veronica, she evinced a distress at the responsibility which, she feared, must rest upon her. Veronica, dark and silent, played such heart-piercing strains, that father could not bear to hear her; so when she played, for he dared not ask her to desist, he went away. To me she had scarcely spoken, since the funeral. She wore the same dress each day —one of black silk—and a small, black mantle, pinned across her bosom. Soon the doors began to open and shut after their old fashion, and people came and went as of old on errands of begging or borrowing.

At the table, we felt a sense of haste; instead of lingering, as was our wont, we separated soon, with an indifferent air, as if we were called by business, not sent away by sorrow. But if our eyes fell on a certain chair, empty against the wall, a cutting pang was felt, which was not all concealed; for there were sudden breaks in our common-place talk, which diverged into wandering channels, and betrayed a tension of feeling.

Several weeks passed, through which I endured an aching, aimless melancholy. My thoughts continually drifted into the vacuum in our atmosphere, and returned to impress me with a disbelief in the enjoyment, or necessity, of keeping myself employed with the keys of an instrument, which, let me strike ever so cunningly, it was certain I could never obtain mastery over.

One day I went to walk by the shore, for the first time since my return. When I set my foot on the ground, the intolerable light of the brilliant day blazed through me; I was luminously dark, for it blinded me. Picking my way over the beach, left bare by the tide, with my eyes fixed downwards till I could see, I reached the point between our house and the light-house and turned towards the sea, inhaling its cool freshness. I climbed out to a flat, low rock, on the point; it was dry in the sun, and the weeds hanging from its sides were black and crisp. I put my long, woolen shawl on it, and stretched myself along its edge. Little pools meshed from the sea by the numberless rocks round me, engrossed my attention. How white and pellucid was the shallow near me—no shadow but the shadow of my face bending over it—nothing to ripple its surface, but my imperceptible breath! By and by a bunch of knotted-wrack floated in from the outside, and lodged in a crevice; a minute creature with fringed feet darted from it, and swam across it. After the knotted-wrack came the fragment of a green and silky substance, delicate enough to have been the remnant of a web, woven in the palace of Circe. "There must be a current," I thought, "which sends them here." And I watched the inlet, for other waifs; but nothing more came. Eye-like bubbles rose from among the fronds of the knotted-wrack, and sailing on uncertain voyages broke one by one, and were wrecked to nothingness. The last vanished; the pool showed me the motionless shadow of my face again, on which I pondered, till I suddenly became aware of a slow, internal oscillation, which increased till I felt in a strange tumult. I put my hand in the pool, and troubled its surface.

"Hail, Cassandra! Hail!"

I sprang up the highest rock on the point, and looked out seawards, to catch a glimpse of the flying Spirit who had touched me. My soul was brought in poise, and quickened with the beauty before me! The wide, shimmering plain of sea—its aerial blue, stretching beyond the limits of my vision in one direction, upbearing transverse, cloud-like islands in another, varied and shadowed by shore and sky—mingled its essence with mine.

The wind was coming; under the far horizon the mass of waters began to undulate. Dark, spear-like clouds rose above it, and menaced the east. The speedy wind tossed and teazed the sea nearer and nearer, till I was surrounded by a gulf of milky green foam. As the tide rolled in I retreated, stepping back from rock to rock, round which the waves curled and hissed, baffled in their attempt to climb over me. I stopped on the verge of the tide-mark: the sea was seeking me, and I must wait. It gave tongue as its lips touched my feet, roaring in the caves, falling on the level beaches with a mad, boundless joy!

"Have then at life!" my senses cried to it. "We will possess its longing silence, rifle its waiting beauty. We will rise up naked in its light and warmth, and cry, 'Come, for we dissolve.' Its roar, its fury, its madness—we will have—*all*." I turned and walked swiftly homeward, treading the ridges of white sand, the black drifts of sea weed, as if they had been a smooth floor.

Aunt Merce was in the door.

"We are going to have the long May storm. The gulls are flying round the light-house," she said. "How high the tide is! You must want your dinner. I wish you *would* see to Fanny; she is lording it over us all."

"Yes, yes, I will do it; you may depend on me. I will reign, and serve also."

"Oh Cassandra, *can* you give up *yourself*?"

"I must, I suppose. Confound the spray, it is flying against the windows."

"Come in; your hair is wet, and your shawl is wringing. Now for a cold."

"I never shall have any more colds, aunt Merce; never mean to have anything to myself—entirely, you know."

"You do me good, you dear girl; I love you;" and she began to cry. "There's nothing but cold ham and boiled rice for your dinner."

"What time is it?"

"Near three."

I opened the door of the dining-room; the table was laid, and I walked round it, on a tour of inspection.

"I thought you might as well have your dinner, all at once," said Fanny, by the window, with her feet tucked up on the rounds of her chair. "Here it is."

"I perceive. Who arranged it?"

"Me and Paddy Margaret."

"How many table-cloths have we?"

"Plenty. I thought as you didn't seem to care about any regular hour for dinner, and made us all wait, *I* needn't be particular; besides, I am not the waiter, you know."

She had set on the dishes used in the kitchen. I pulled off cloth and all—the dishes crashed, of course—and sat down on the floor, picking out the remains for my repast.

"What will Mr. Morgeson say?" she asked, turning very red.

"Shall you clear away this rubbish by the time he comes home?"

"Why I must, musn't I?"

"I hope so. Where's Veronica?"

"She has been gone since twelve; Sam carried her to Temperance's house."

I continued my meal. Fanny brought a chair for me, which I did not take. I scarcely tasted what I ate. A wall had risen up suddenly before me, which divided me from my dreams; I was inside of it, on a prosaic domain I must henceforth be confined to. The unthought of result of mother's death—disorganization, began to show itself. The individuality which had kept the weakness and faults of our family life in abeyance, must have been powerful; and I had never recognized it! I attempted to analyze this influence, so strong, yet so invisibly produced. I thought of her mildness, her dreamy habits, her indifference, and her incapacity of comprehending natures unlike her own. Would endowment of character explain it—that faculty which we could not change, give, or take? Character was a mysterious, and indestructible fact, and a fact that I had had little respect for. Upon what a false basis I had gone—a basis of extremes. I had seen men as trees walking; that was my experience.

"You'll choke yourself with that dry bread," exclaimed Fanny, really concerned at my abstraction.

"Where is my trunk? Did you unlock it?"

"I took from it what you needed, at the time; but it is not unpacked, and it is in the upper hall closet."

She was picking up the broken delf meekly.

"Did you see a small bag I brought? And where's my satchel? Good heavens! What has made me put off that letter so? For I have thought of it, and yet I have kept it back."

"It is safe, in your own closet, Miss Cassandra; and the box is there."

"Aunt Merce," I called, "will you have nothing to eat?"

She laughed hysterically, when she saw what I had done.

"Where is Hepsey, aunt Merce?"

"She goes to bed after dinner, you know, for an hour or two."

"She must go from here."

"Oh!" they both chorused, "what for?"

"She is too old."

"She *has* money, and a good house," said aunt Merce, "if she must go. I wonder how Mary stood it so long."

"Turn 'em off," said Fanny, "when they grow useless."

Aunt Merce reddened, and looked hurt.

"I shall keep *you*: look sharp now after your own disinterestedness."

I wanted to go to my room, as I thought it time to arrange my trunks and boxes; besides, I needed rest—the sad luxury of re-action. But word was brought to the house, that Arthur had disappeared, in company with two boys, notorious for mischief. His teacher was afraid they might have put out to sea, in a crazy sail-boat. We were in a state of alarm till dark, when father came home, bringing him, having found him on the way to Milford. Veronica had not returned. It stormed violently, and father was vexed because a horse must be sent through the storm for her. At last I obtained the asylum of my room, in an irritable frame of mind, convinced that such would be my condition each day. Composure came with putting my drawers and shelves in order. The box with Desmond's flowers I threw into the fire, without opening it, ribbon and all, for I could not endure the sight of them. I unfolded the dresses I had worn on the occasions of my meeting him—even the collars and ribbons I had adorned myself with, were conned with jealous, greedy eyes; in looking at them all other remembrances connected with my visit vanished. The handkerchief scented with violets, which I found in the pocket of the dress I had worn, when I met him at Mrs. Hepburn's, made me childish. I was holding it when Veronica entered, bringing with her an atmosphere of dampness.

"Violet! I like it. There is not one blooming yet, Tempe-

rance says. Why are they so late? There's only this pitiful snake-grass," holding up a bunch of drooping, pale blossoms.

"Oh, Verry, can you forgive me? I did not forget these, but I felt the strangest disinclination to look them up." And I gave her the jewel box and letter.

She seized them, and opened the box first.

"Child-Verry."

"I never was a child, you know; but I am always trying to find my childhood."

She took a necklace from the box, composed of a single string of small, beautiful pearls, from which hung an egg-shaped amethyst, of pure violet. She fastened the necklace round her throat.

"It is as lucent as the moon," she said, looking down at the amethyst, which shed a watery light; "I wish you had given it to me before."

Breaking the seal of the letter, with a twist of her mouth at the coat-of-arms impressed upon it, she shook out the closely-written pages, and saying, "There is a volume," began reading. "It is very good," she observed at the end of the first page, "a regular composition," and went on with an air of increasing interest. "How does he look?" she asked, stopping again.

"As if he longed to see you."

Her eyes went in quest of him so far, that I thought they must be startled by a sudden vision.

"How did you find his family?"

"Not like him much."

"I knew that; he would not have loved me so suddenly, had I not been wholly unlike any women he had known."

"His character is individual."

"I should know that from his influence upon you."

She looked at me wistfully, smoothed my hair with her cool hand, and resumed the letter.

"He thinks he will not come to Surrey with you; asks me to tell him my wishes," she repeated rapidly, translating from the original. "What do I think of our future? How shall we propose any change? Will Cassandra describe her visit? Will she tell me that he thinks of going abroad?"

She dropped the letter. "What pivot is he swinging on? What is he uncertain about?"

"There must be more to read."

She turned another page.

"If I go to Switzerland, (I think of going on account of family affairs) when shall I return? My family, of course, ex-

pected me to marry within their pale; that is, my mother rather prefers selecting a wife for me, than that I should do it. But, as you shall never come to Belem, her plans or wishes need make no difference to us. If Cassandra would be to us what she might, how things would clear! Don't you think, my love, that there should be the greatest sympathy between sisters?"

I laughed.

Verry said she did not like his letter much after all. He evidently thought her incapable of understanding ordinary matters. It was as well, though; it made their love idyllic.

"Let us speak of matters nearer home."

"Let us go to my room, the storm is so loud this side of the house."

"No; you must stay till the walls tremble. Have you seen, Verry, any work for me to do here?"

"Everything is changed. I have tried to be as steady as when mother was here, but I cannot; I whirl with a vague idea of liberty. Did she keep the family conscience? Now that she is gone, I feel responsible no more."

"An idea of responsibility has come to me—what plain people call Duty."

"I do not feel it," she cried mournfully. "I must yield to you then. You can be good."

"I must act so; but help me, Verry, I have contrary desires."

"What do they find to feed on? What are they? Have you your evil spirit?"

"Yes; a devil named Temperament."

"Now you teach me, Cassandra."

"Not I. Go, and write Ben. Make excuses for my negligence towards you, about his letter. Tell him to come. I shall write Alice and Helen, this evening. We have been shut off from the world by the gate of death; but we must come back."

"One thing you may be sure of—though I shall be no help, I shall never annoy you. I know that my instincts are fine only in a self-centering direction; yours are different. I shall trust them. Since you have spoken, I perceive the shadows you have raised, and must encounter. I retreat before them, admiring your discernment, placing confidence in your powers. You convince, if you do not win me. Who can guess how your every plan and hope of well-doing may be thwarted? I need say no more?"

"Nothing more."

She left the room. There would be no antagonism between us; but there would be pain—on one side. The distance which had kept us apart was shortened, but not annihilated. What could I expect? The silent and serene currents which flow from souls like Veronica's, and Ben's, whose genius is not of the heart, refuse to enter a nature so turbulent as mine. But my destiny must be changed by such! It was taken for granted that my own spirit should not rule me. And with what reward? Any, but that of sympathy. But I muttered:

> "'I dimly see
> My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
> Conjectures of the features of her child
> Ere it is born.'"

The house trembled in the fury of the storm. The waves were hoarse with their vain bawling, and the wind shrieked at every crevice of chimney, door, and window. No answering excitement in me now! I had grown older.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A few days after, I went to Milford with father, to make some purchases. I sought a way to speak to him about the future, intending also to go on with various remarks; but it seemed difficult to begin. Observing him, as he contemplated the road before us, grave and abstracted, I recollected the difference between his age and mother's, and wondered at my blindness, while I compared the old man of my childhood, who existed for the express purpose of making money for the support and pleasure of his family, and to accommodate all its whims, with the man before me,—barely forty-eight, without a wrinkle in his firm, ruddy face, and only an occasional white hair, in ambuscade among his fair, curly locks. My exclusive right over him, I felt doubtful about. I gave my attention to the road also, and remarked that I thought the season was late.

"Yes. Why didn't Somers come home with you?"

"I hardly know. The matter of the marriage was not settled, nor a plan of spending a summer abroad."

"Will it suit him to vegetate in Surrey? Veronica will never leave home."

"He has no ambition."

"It is a curse to inherit money in this country. Mr. Somers writes that Ben will have three thousand a year; but that the disposal, at present, is not in his power."

I explained as well as I could the Pickersgill property.

"I see how it is. The children are waiting for the principal, and have exacted the income; and their lives have been warped for this reason. Ben has not begun life yet. But I like Somers exceedingly."

"He is the best of them, his mother, the worst."

"Did you have a passage?"

"She attempted."

"I can give Veronica nothing beyond new clothes, or furniture; whatever she likes that way. To draw money from my business is impossible. My business fluctuates like quicksilver, and it is enormously extended. If they should have two thousand a year, it would be a princely income; I should feel so now, if I had it clear of incumbrance."

"Do you mean to say that your income does not amount to so much?"

"My outgoes and incomes have for a long time been involved with each other. I do not separate them. I have never lived extravagantly. My luxury has been in doing too much."

A cold feeling came over me.

"By the way, Mr. Somers pays you compliments in his note. How old are you? I forget." He surveyed me with a doubtful look. "Are you thin, or what is it?"

"East wind, I guess. I am twenty-five."

"And Veronica?"

"Over twenty."

"She must be married. I hope she will cut her practical eye-teeth then, for Somers' sake."

"He does not require a practically-minded woman."

"What do men require?"

"They require the souls and bodies of women, without having the trouble of knowing the difference between the one and the other."

"So bad as that? Whoa."

He stopped to pay toll, and the conversation stopped.

On the way home, however, I found a place to begin my proposed talk, and burst out with, "I think Hepsey should leave us."

"What ails Hepsey?"

"She is so old, and is such a poke."

"You must tell her yourself, to go. She has money enough to be comfortable; I have some of it, as well as that of half the widows, old maids, and sailors' wives in Surrey, being better than the Milford banks, they think."

I felt another cold twinge.

"What! are our servants your creditors?"

"Servants—don't say that," he said harshly; "we do not have these distinctions here."

"It costs you more than two thousand a year."

"How do you know?"

"Think of the hired people—the horses, the cows, pigs, hens, garden, fields—all costing more than they yield."

"What has come over you? Did you ever think of money before? Tell me, have you ever been in our cellar?"

"Yes, to look at the kittens."

"In the store room?"

"For apples and sweetmeats."

"Look into these matters, if you like; they never troubled your mother, at least I never knew that they did; but don't make your reforms tiresome."

What encouragement!

In the yard we saw Fanny contemplating a brood of hens, which were picking up corn before her. "Take Fanny for a coadjutor; she is eighteen, and a bright girl." She sprang to the chaise, and caught the reins, which he threw into her hands, unbuckled the girth, and, before I was out of sight, was leading the horse to water.

"We might economize in the way of a stable boy," I said.

"Pooh! you are not indulgent. Here," whistling to Fanny, "let Sam do that." She pouted her lips at him, and he laughed.

Aunt Merce gave me a letter the moment I entered. "It is in Alice's hand; sit down and read it."

She took her handkerchief, and a bit of flagroot from her pocket, to be ready for the sympathetic flow which she expected. But the letter was short. She had seen, it said, the announcement of mother's death in a newspaper, at the time. She knew what a change it had mde. We might be sure that we should never find our old level, however happy and forgetful we might grow. She bore us all in mind, but sent no message, except to aunt Merce; she must come to Rosville, before summer was over. And could she assist me, by taking Arthur for a while? Edward was a quiet, compan-

ionable lad, and Arthur would be safe with him, at home, and at school.

"I wish you would go, aunt Merce."

"Yes, why not, Mercy?" asked father. "Would it be a good thing for Arthur, Cassandra? You know what Surrey is for a boy."

"I know what Rosville was for a girl," I thought. It was an excellent plan for Arthur; but a feeling of repulsion at the idea of his going, kept me silent.

"Is it a good idea?" he repeated.

"Yes, yes, father; send him by all means."

Aunt Merce sighed. "If he goes, I must go; I can be the receptacle for his griefs and trials, for a while, at least, and be a little useful that way. You know, Locke, I am but a poor creature."

"I was not aware of the fact, and am astonished to hear you say so, Mercy, when you know how far back I can remember. Mary shines all along those years, and you with her."

"Locke, you are the kindest man in the world.

"He feels fifty years younger than she appears to him," I thought; but I thanked him for his consideration for her.

"Veronica has had a letter to-day from Mr. Somers. What did you buy in Milford?"

"Mr. Morgeson," Fanny called, "Bumpus, the horse-jockey, is in the yard. He says Bill is spavined. I think he lies; he wants to trade."

He went out with her.

"Aunt Merce, let us be more together. What do you think of spending our evenings in the parlor?"

"Do you expect to break up our habits?"

"I would, if I could."

"Try Veronica."

"I have."

"Will she give up solitude?"

"Bring your knitting to the parlor, and see."

Veronica told me that Ben was coming in a week.

"Glad of it."

"Sends love to you."

"Obliged."

"Calls me 'poor girl;' speaks beautifully of his remembrance of mother, and—"

"What?"

"Tells me to rely on your faithful soul; to trust in the reasonable hope of our remaining together; to try to establish an

equality of tastes and habits between us. He tells me what I never knew,—that I need you—that we need each other."

"Is that all?"

"There is more for *me*."

I left her. Closing the door of my room gently, I thought.

"Ben is a good man; but for all that, I feel like blind Sampson, just now. Could I lay my hands on the pillars, which support the temple he has built, I would wrench them from their foundation, and surprise him, by toppling the roof on his head."

His arrival was delayed a few days. When he came, Surrey looked its best, for it was June; and though the winds were chilly, the grass was grown, and the orchard leaves were crowding off the blossoms. The woods were vividly green. The fauns were playing there, and the syrens sang under the sea. But I had other thoughts; the fauns and the syrens were not for me, perplexed as I was with household cares. Hepsey proposed staying another year, but I was firm; and she went, begging Fanny to go with her, and be as a daughter. She declined; but the proposition influenced her to be troublesome to me. She told me she was of age now, and that no person had a right to control her. At present she was useful where she was, and might remain.

"Will you have wages?" I asked her.

"That is Mr. Morgeson's business."

My anger would have pleased her, so I concealed it.

"Your ability, Fanny, is better than your disposition, Me,—you do not suit at all; but it is certain that father depends on you for his small comforts, and Veronica likes you. I wish you would stay."

She placed her arms akimbo.

"I should like to find you out, exactly. I can't. I never could find out your mother; all the rest of you, are as clear as daylight." And she snapped her fingers, as though 'the rest,' were between them.

"You lack faith."

"You believe that this is a beautiful world, don't you? I hate it. I should think *you* had a reason too, for hating it. Pray what have you got?"

"An ungrateful imp that was bequeathed me."

She saw father in the garden, beckoning to me. "He wants you. I do *not* hate the world always," she added, with her eyes fixed on him.

I was disposed to trouble the still waters of our domestic

life with theories. Our ways were too mechanical. The old-fashioned asceticism which considered air, sleep, food, as mere necessities was stupid. But I had no assistance; Veronica thought that her share of my plans must consist of a diligent notice of all I did, which she gave, and then went to her own life, kept sacredly apart. Fanny laughed in her sleeve, and took another side—the practical, and shone in it, becoming in fact the true manager and worker, while I played. Aunt Merce was helpless. She neglected her former cares; and father was, what he always had been at home,—heedless, and indifferent.

One morning we stood on the landing stair—Ben, Veronica, and myself, looking from the window. A silver mist so thinly wrapped the orchard that the wet, shining leaves thrust themselves through in patches. Birds were singing beneath, feeling the warmth of the sun, scarcely hid. The young leaves and blossoms steeping in the mist sent up a delicious odor.

"I like Surrey better and better," he said; "the atmosphere suits me."

"Oh, I am glad," answered Verry. "I could never go away. It is not beautiful, I know; in fact, it is meagre, when it comes to be talked of; but there are suggestions here, which occasionally stimulate me."

"Verry, can you keep the people away from me when I live here?"

"I do not like that feeling in you."

"I like fishermen."

"Not a boat?"

"Yes, I'll have a boat."

"I shall never go out with you."

"Cass will. I shall cruize with her, and you, in your house, need not see us depart. Eric, the Red, made excursions in this region. We will skirt the shores which are the same, nearly, as when he sailed from them, with his Northmen; and the ancient barnacles will think, when they see her fair hair, which she will let ripple round her stately shoulders, that he has come back with his bride."

Verry looked with delight at him, and then at me. "Her long, yellow hair, and her stately shoulders," she repeated.

"Will you go?" he asked.

"Of course," I answered, going down stairs. I happened to look back, on the way. His arm was round Verry, but he was looking after me. He withdrew it as our eyes met, and

came down; but she remained, looking from the window. We went into the parlor, and I shut the door.

"Now then," I said.

He took a note from his pocket and gave it to me.

I broke its seal, and read; "Tell Ben, before you can reflect upon it, that *I* will go abroad, and then repent of it,—as I shall. Desmond."

"'Tell Ben,'" I repeated aloud, "'that *I* will go abroad. Desmond.'"

"Do you guess, as he does, that my reason for going, was, that I might be kept aloof from all sight and sound of you two? In the result towards which I saw *you* drive, I could have no part."

"Stay; I know that he will go."

"You do not know. Nor do you know what such a man is, when—" checking himself.

"He is in love?"

"If you choose to call it that."

"I do."

All there was to say, should be said now; but I felt more agitated than was my wont. These feelings did not accord with my housewifely condition, and upset me. I looked at him; he began to walk about, taking up a book, which he leaned his head over, and whose covers he bent back till they cracked.

"You would read me that way," I said.

"It is rather your way of reading."

"Can you understand that Desmond and I influence each other to act the same? And that we comprehend each other without collision? I love him, as a mature woman may love, —once, Ben, only once; the fire-tipped arrows rarely pierce soul and sense, blood and brain."

He made a gesture, expressive of contempt.

"Men are different; he is different."

"You have already spoken for me, and, I suppose, you will for him."

"I venture to. Desmond is a violent, tyranical, sensual man; his perceptions are his pulses. That he is handsome, clever, resolute, and sings well, I can admit; but no more."

"We will not bandy his merits or his demerits between us. Let us observe him. And now, tell me,—what am I?"

"You have been my delight and misery ever since I knew you. I saw you first, so impetuous, yet self-contained! Incapable of insincerity, devoid of affectation, and courageously,

naturally beautiful. Then, to my amazement, I saw that, unlike most women, you understood your instincts; that you dared to define them; that you were impious enough to follow them. You debased my ideal; you confused me, also, for I could never affirm that you were wrong,—forcing me to consult abstractions, they gave a verdict in your favor, which almost unsexed you in my estimation. I must own that the man who is willing to marry you, has more courage than I have. Is it strange, that when I found your counterpart, Veronica, that I yielded? Her delicate, pure, ignorant soul suggests to me an eternal repose."

"It is not necessary that you should fatigue your mind with abstractions concerning her. It will be the literal you will hunger for."

"Damn it! the world has got a twist in it, and we all go round with it, devilishly awry."

I said no more. He had defined my limits. He would, as far as possible, control me, without pity, or compassion,—thinking, probably, that I needed none; the powers he had always given me credit for, must be sufficing. I could not comprehend him. How was it, that he and Kerry gave me such horrible pain? Was it exceptional? Could I claim nothing from women? Had they thought me an anomaly? It was Veronica who was called peculiar, and original. The end of it all must be an assimilation with their happiness!

"Well?" he said.

"Thank you."

Veronica came in, swinging her bonnet. "'The Sagamore' has arrived. I am going to stand on the wharf, to count the sailors,—to see if they have all come home. Will you go, Ben?"

He complied, and I was left alone.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

When he left Surrey, I sent no message, or letter, by him, and he asked for none. I shut myself in my room to write to Desmond, and did not finish my letter till after midnight. Intoxicated with the liberty my pen offered me, I roamed over a wide field of paper. The next morning I burnt it. But there

was something to be said to him, before his departure; and I wrote it. I might have condensed still more. In this way:

Vestigia Retrorsum.

Charles Morgeson.

When the answer came, I reflected before I read it, that it was the last link of the chain between us. Not a bright one, at the best, nor garlanded with flowers; nor was its metal silver, or gold. There was rust on it; it was corroded, for it was forged out of his and my substance.

I read: "I am yours, as I have been, since the night I asked you 'How came those scars?' Did you guess that I read your story? I go from you with one idea,—I love you, and I *must* go. Brave woman! you have shamed me to death almost."

He sent me a watch. I was to wear it from the second of July. It was small and plain, but there were a few words scratched inside the case, with the point of a knife, which I read every day. Veronica's eye fell on it, the first time I put it on.

"What time is it?"

"Near one."

"I thought from the look of it, that it might be near two."

"Don't mar my ideal of you, Verry, by growing witty."

She shrugged her shoulders. "You found it, washed ashore, among the rocks; was it bruised?"

"A man gave it to me."

"A merman, who fills the sea-halls with a voice of power."

"May be."

"Tut, Ben gave it to you. It is a kind of housekeepish present; did he add scissors and needle-case?"

"What if the merman should take me some day, to the 'pale sea-groves straight and high?'"

"You must never, never go. You cannot leave me, Cass!" She grasped my sleeve, and pulled me round. "How much was there for you to do in the life before us, which you talked about?"

"I remember. There is much, to be sure."

Fanny's quick eye caught the glitter of the watch. The mystery teazed her; but she said nothing.

Aunt Merce had gone to Rosville with Arthur. There was no visitor with us; there had been none besides Ben, since mother died. That had kept them all at bay. I wrote to Helen to come, and pass the summer; but her child was too

young for such a journey, she concluded. Ben had sailed for Switzerland. The summer, whose biography like an insignificant life must be written in a few words, was a long one to live through. It happened to be a dry season, which was infrequent on our coast. Days rolled by without the variation of wind, rain, or hazy weather. The sky was an opaque blue till noon, when solid white clouds rose in the north, and sailed seawards, or barred the sunset which turned them crimson and black. The mown fields grew yellow under the stare of the brassy sun, and the leaves cracked and curled for the want of moisture. It was dull in the village ; no ships were building, none sailed, none arrived. But father was more absorbed than ever,—more away from home. He wrote often in in the evening, and pored over ledgers with his book-keeper. Late at night I found him sorting and reading papers. He forgot us. But Fanny, as he grew forgetful, improved as housekeeper. Her energy was untiring ; she waited so much on him that I grew forgetful of him. Veronica was the same as before : her room was pleasant with color and perfume. She took the same delicate pains with her dress each day, and looked as fair as a lily, as serene as the lake on which it floats, except when Fanny tried her. With me, she never lost temper. But I saw little of her ; she was as fixed in her individual pursuits as ever.

There were intervals now when all my grief for mother returned, and I sat in my darkened chamber, recalling, with a sad persistence, her gestures, her motions, the tones of her voice, through all the past back to my first remembrance. The places she inhabited—her opinions and her actions, I commented on, with a minuteness that allowed no detail to escape. When my thoughts turned from her, it seemed as if she were newly lost in the vast and wandering Universe of the Dead, whence I had brought her.

In September a letter came from Ben, which promised a return by the last of October. With the ruffling autumnal breezes my stagnation vanished, and I began my shore-life again, in a mood which made memory like hope ; but staying out too late one evening, I came home in a chill. From the chill I went to a fever, which lasted some days. Veronica came every day to see me, and groaned over my hair which fell off ; but she could not stay long ; the smell of medicine made her ill,—the dark room gave her an uneasiness ; besides, she did not know what she should say. I sent her away always. Fanny took care of me, till I was able to move about

the room; then she absented herself most of the time. One afternoon Veronica came to tell me that Margaret, the Irish girl, was going; she supposed that Fanny was insufferable, and that she could not stay.

"I must be well by to-morrow," I said.

The next day I went down stairs, and was greeted with the epithet of "Scarecrow."

"Do you feel pretty strong?" asked Fanny, with a peculiar accent, when we happened to be alone.

'What is the matter? Out with it!"

'Something's going to turn up here; something ails Mr. Morgeson."

I guessed his ailment.

"He is going to fail—he is smashed all to nothing. He knows what will be said about him, yet he goes about with perfect calmness. But he feels it. I tried him this morning; I gave him tea instead of coffee, and he didn't know it!"

"Margaret's gone?"

"There must be rumors; for she asked him for her wages a day or two ago. He paid her, and told her she had better go."

I examined my hands involuntarily. She tittered.

"How easy you will wash the long-necked glasses and pitchers, with your slim hand!

I dropped into a mental calculation, respecting the cost of an entire change of wardrobe suitable to our reduced circumstances, and speculated on a neat, cottage-style of cookery, which involved cream and eggs merely.

"I think I must be going, too," she said with cunning eyes.

"How can you bear to go, when there will be so much trouble for you to enjoy?"

"How tired you look, Cass," said Veronica, slipping in quietly. "What are you talking about? Has Fanny been tormenting you?"

"Of course," she answered. "But if am not mistaken, you will be tormented by others soon."

"Go out!" said Veronica. "Leave us, pale pest."

"You will ask me to stay yet."

"What does she mean?"

I hesitated.

"Tell me," she said, in her imperative, gentle voice. "What is there that I cannot know?"

"That's what you call high toned, isn't it?" inquired Fanny.

Veronica threw her book at her.

"The truth is ladies, that your father, the principa' man in

Surrey, is not worth a dollar. What do you think of it? And how will you come off the high horse?" And she drummed on the table energetically.

"Did you think of going, Fanny?" said Veronica. "You will stay, and do better than ever. If you attempt to go, I shall bring you back."

This was the invitation she wanted, and was satisfied with.

"I must give up flowers," said Veronica.

"I wonder if we shall keep the pigs this fall?" said Fanny.

"You are an animal."

"That's why I inquire into congenial subjects. Shall we sit in the free seats in the meeting-house? It will be fine for the boys to drop paper balls on our heads, from the gallery. I'd like to see them do it, though," she concluded, as if she felt that such an insult would infringe upon her rights.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was true. Locke Morgeson had been insolvent for five years. All this time he had thrown ballast out from every side, in the shape of various ventures, which he trusted would lighten the ship, that, nevertheless, drove steadily on to ruin. Then he steered blindly, straining his credit to the utmost; and then—the crash. His losses were so extended and gradual, that the public were not aware of his condition till he announced it. There was a general exasperation against him The Morgeson family rose up with one accord to represent the public mind, and drove Veronica wild.

"Have you acted wrongly, father?" she asked.

"I have confessed, Verry."

Our house was thronged for several days. "Pay us," cried the female portion of his creditors. In vain father represented that he was still young—that his business days were not over—that they must wait, for paid they should be. "Pay us now, for we are women," they still cried. Fanny opened the doors for these persons as wide as possible when they came, and shut them with a bang when they went; or astonished them with a satirical politeness, or confounded them with an impertinent silence. The important creditors held meetings to agree what should be done, and effected an arrangement by which his property was left in his hands for three years, to manage

for the benefit of his creditors. The arrangement proved that his integrity was not suspected; but it was an ingenious punishment, that he should keep in sight, improve, or change, for others, what had been his own. I was glad when he decided to sell his real estate and personal property. He would trust to the ships alone, but would build no more. I begged him to keep our house till Ben should return. He consented to wait; but I did not tell Verry what I had done. All the houses he owned, lots, carriages, horses, domestic stock, the fields lying round our house—were sold. When he began to sell, the fury of retrenchment seized him, and he laid out a life of self-denial for us three. Arthur's ten thousand dollars were safe, who was therefore provided for. He would bring wood and water for us; the rest we must do, with Fanny's help. We could dine in the kitchen, and put our beds in one room; by shutting up the house in part, we should have less labor to perform. We attempted to carry out his ideas, but Veronica was so dreadfully in Fanny's way and mine, that we were obliged to entreat her to resume her old rôle. As for Fanny, she was happy—working like a beaver day and night. Father was much at home, and took an extraordinary interest in the small details which Fanny carried out.

When Temperance heard of these arrangements, she came down with Abram, in their green and yellow wagon. Temperance drove the shaggy, old white horse, for Abram was intrusted with the care of a meal bag, in which were fastened a cock and four hens. We should see, she said, when she let them out, whether we were to keep hens or not. Was Veronica to go without new-laid eggs? Had he sold the cat, she sarcastically inquired of father.

"Who is going to do your washing, girls?" she asked, taking off her bonnet

"We all do it."

"Now I shall die a laughing!" But she contradicted herself by crying heartily. "One day in every week, I tell *you*, I am coming; and Fanny and I can do the washing in a jiffy."

"Sure," said Abram, "you can; the sass is in."

"Sass or no sass, I'm coming."

She made me laugh for the first time in a month. I was too tired generally to be merry, with my endeavors to carry out father's wishes, and keep up the old aspect of the house. When she left us we all felt more cheerful. Aunt Merce wanted to come home, but Verry and I thought she had better stay in Rosville. We could not deny it to ourselves, that

home was sadly altered, or that we were melancholy; and though we never needed her more, we begged her not to come. Happily father's zeal soon died away. A boy was hired, and as there was no out of doors work for him to do, he relieved Fanny, who in her turn relieved me. Finding time to look into myself, I perceived a change in my estimation of father; a vague impression of weakness in him troubled me. I also discovered that I had lost my atmosphere. My life was coarse, hard, colorless! I lived in an insignificant country village; I was faded; I was poor. My theories had failed, and my practice was like my moods—variable. But I concluded that if *To-Day* would go on without bestowing upon me sharp pains, depriving me of sleep, mutilating me with an accident, or sending a disaster to those belonging to me, I would be content. Arthur held out a hope, by writing me, that he meant to support me handsomely. He wished me to send him some shirt studs; and told me to keep the red horse. He had heard that I was very handsome when I was in Rosville. A girl had asked him how I looked now. He said that I was old, and she laughed; but he told her I was handsomer than any woman Rosville could boast of.

October had gone, and we had not heard from Ben. Veronica came to my room of nights, and listened to wind and sea, as she never had before. Sometimes she was there long after I had gone to bed, to look out of the windows. If it was calm, she went away quietly; if the sea was rough, she was sorrowful, but said nothing. The lethargic summer had given way to a boisterous autumn of cold gray weather, driving rains, and hollow gales. At last he came—to Veronica first. He gave a deep breath of delight when he stood again on the hearth-rug, before our now unwonted parlor fire. The sight of his ruddy face, vigorous form, and gay voice, made me as merry, as the attendants of a feast are, when they inhale the odor of the viands they carry, hear the gurgle of the wine they pour, and echo the laughter of the guests.

There was much to tell that astonished him, but he could not be depressed; everything must be arranged to suit us. He would buy the house, provided he could pay for it in instalments. Did I know that his mother had docked his allowance, as soon as she knew that he would marry Verry?

"How should I know it?"

I had not heard then that Desmond's was doubled, when she heard his intention of going to Spain.

"How should I know that?"

One thing I should know, however—and that was, that Desmond had begged his mother to make no change in the disposition of her income. He had declined the extra allowance, and then accepted it, to offer him—Ben. Was not that astonishing!

"Did you take it?"

"No; but pa did."

All he could call his was fifteen hundred a year. Was that enough for them to live on, and pay a little every year for the house? Could we all live there together, just the same? Would we, he asked father, and allow him to be an inmate?

Father shook hands with him so violently that he winced; and Verry crumpled up a handful of his tawny locks, and kissed them, whereat he said, "Are you grown a human woman?"

About the wedding? He could only stay to appoint a time, for he must post to Belem. It must be very soon.

"In a year or two," said Verry

"Verry!"

"In three weeks, then."

"From to-day?"

"No, that will be the date of the wreck of the 'Locke Morgeson;' but three weeks from to-morrow. Must we have anybody here, Ben?"

"Helen, and Alice, Cassandra?"

"Certainly."

"I have no friends," said Verry.

"What will you wear, Verry?" I asked.

"Why this dress," designating her old black silk. Her eyes filled with tears, and went on a pilgrimage towards the unknown heaven, where our mother was. *She* could only come to the wedding as a ghost. I imagined her flitting through the empty spaces, from room to room, scared and troubled by the pressure of mortal life around her.

"I shall not wear white," Verry said hastily.

The very day Ben went to Belem one of father's outstanding ships arrived. She came into the harbor presenting the unusual sight of trying oil on deck. Black and greasy from hull to spar, she was a pleasant sight, for she was full of sperm oil. Little boys ran down to the house to inform us of that fact before she was moored. "Wouldn't Mr. Morgeson be all right now that his luck had changed?" they asked.

At supper father said, "By George!" several times, by that oath resuming something of his old self. "Those women can now be paid," he said. "If I could have held out till now, I

could have gone on without failing. This is the first good voyage the 'Oswego' ever made me; if another ship, the 'Adamant,' will come full, while oil is so high, I shall arrange matters with my creditors before the three years are up. To hold my own again—Ah! I never will venture all upon the uncertain field of the sea."

The 'Oswego's' captain sent us a box of shells the next day, and a small Portuguese boy, named Manuel—a handsome, black-eyed, husky-voiced fellow, in a red shirt, which was bound round his waist with a leather belt, from which hung a sailor's sheath-knife.

"He is volcanic," said Verry.

"The Portuguese are all handsome," said Fanny, poking him, to see if he would notice it. But he did not remove his eyes from Veronica.

"He shall be your page, Verry."

The next night a message came to us that Abram was dying. If we ever meant to come, Temperance sent word, some of us might come now; but she would rather have Mr. Morgeson. Fanny insisted upon going with him to carry a lantern. Manuel offered her his knife, when he comprehended that she was going through a dark road.

"You are a perfect heathen. There's nothing to be afraid of, except that Mr. Morgeson may walk into the ditch; will a knife keep us out of that?"

"Knife is good—it kills," he said, showing his white, vegetable-ivory teeth.

Verry and I sat up till they returned, at two in the morning. Abram had died about midnight, distressed to the last with worldly cares. "He asked," said father, "if I remembered his poor boy, whose chest never came home. He wished to hear some one read a hymn; Temperance broke down, and I read it, while Fanny cried hysterically."

"I was freezing cold," she answered haughtily.

In the morning Verry and I started for Temperance's house; but she waited on the door step, till I had inquired whether we were wanted. I called her in, for Temperance asked for her as soon as she saw me.

"He was a good man, girls," she said with emphasis.

"Indeed he was."

"A little mean, I 'spose."

I put in a demurrer; her face cleared instantly.

"He thought a great deal of your folks."

"And a great deal of you."

"Oh, what a loss I have met with! He had just bought a first-rate overcoat."

"But Temperance," said Verry, with a lamentable candor, "you can come back now."

"Can't you wait for him to be put into the ground?" And she tried to look shocked, but failed.

A friend entered with a doleful face, and Temperance groaned slightly.

"It is all done complete now, Mis Handy. He looks as easy as if he slept, he was *so* limber."

"Yes, yes," answered Temperance, starting up, and hurrying us out of the room, pinching me, with a significant look at Verry. She was afraid that her feelings might be distressed. "The funeral will be day after to-morrow. Don't come; your father will be all that must be here of the family. I shall shut up the house, and come straight to you. I know that I am needed; but you mustn't say a word about pay—I can't stand it, I have had too much affliction to be pestered about wages."

Verry hugged her, and Temperance shed the honestest tears of the day then, she was so gratified with Verry's fondness. Before Abram had been buried a week, she was back again—a fixture, although she declared that she had only come for a spell, as we might know by the size of the bundle she had, showing us one, tied in a blue cotton handkerchief. What should she stay from her own house for, when as good a man as ever lived had left it to her? We knew that she merely comforted a tender conscience by praising the departed, for whom she had small respect, when living. We felt her brightening influence, but Fanny sulked, feeling dethroned.

Ben Pickersgill Somers and Veronica Morgeson were 'published.' Contrary to the usual custom, Verry went to hear her own banns read at the church. She must do all she could, she told me, to realize that she was to be married; had I any thoughts about it, with which I might aid her? She thought it strange that people should marry. She could not decide whether it was the sublimest, or the most inglorious act of one's life. I begged her to think about what she would wear —the time was passing. Father gave me so small a sum for the occasion, I had little opportunity for the splendid; but I purchased what Veronica wished for a dress, and superintended the making of it;—black lace over lavender-colored silk. She said no more about it; but I observed that she put in order all her possessions, as if she were going to undertake a long and uncertain journey. Every box and drawer was arranged. All

her clothes were repaired, refolded, and laid away ; every article was refreshed by a turn or shake up. She made her room a miracle of cleanliness. What she called rubbish she destroyed—her old papers, things with chipped edges, or those that were defaced by wear. She went once to Milford in the time, and bought a purple angola rug, which she put before her arm-chair, and two small silver cups, with covers ; in one was a perfume which Ben liked, but the other was empty. Her favorite blank books were laid on a shelf, and the table, with its inkstand and portfolio, was pushed against the wall. The last ornament which she added to her room was a beautifully woven mat of evergreens, with which she concealed the picture of the avenue, and the nameless man. After it was done she inhabited my room, appearing to feel at home, and glad to have me with her. As the time drew near, she grew silent, and did not play at all. Temperance watched her with anxiety. "If ever she can have one of those nervous spells again, she will have one now," she said. "Don't let her dream. I am turning myself inside out to keep up her appetite."

"Do you ever feel worried about *me*, Tempy ?"

"Lord 'a marcy ! you great, strong thing, why should I ? May be you do want a little praise. I never saw anybody get along so well as you do, now-a-days ; you have altered very much ; I never would have believed it."

"What *was* the trouble with me ?"

"*I* always stuck up for you, gracious knows. Do you know what has been said of you in Surrey ?"

"No."

"Then I shan't tell you ; if I were you, though, I shouldn't trouble myself to be overpolite to the folks who have come and gone here, nigh on to twenty years,—hang 'em !"

A few days before the wedding Aunt Merce and Arthur came home. Arthur was shy at first ; he had found a great change, but being agreeably disappointed, grew lively. I perceived that Aunt Merce had aged since Mother's death ; her manner was changed ; the same objects no longer possessed an interest. But she looked at me penitentially. "I wish I could say," she said, "what I used to say to you,—that you were 'possessed.' Now that there is no occasion for me to comprehend people, I begin to. My education began wrong end foremost. I think Mary's death has taught me something. Do you think of her ? She was the love of my life."

"Women do keep stupid a long time ; but I think they are

capable of growth, beyond the period when men cease to grow, or change."

"Oh, I don't know anything about men, you know."

Temperance and I cleaned the house, opened every room, and made every fire-place ready for a fire—a fire being the chief luxury which I could command. Baking went on up to within a day of the wedding, under Hepsey's supervision, who had been summoned as a helper; Fanny was busy everywhere.

"Mr. Morgeson," said Temperance, "the furniture is too darned shabby for a wedding?"

"It is not mine, you must remember."

"Plague take the creditors! they know as well as I, that you turned Surrey from a herring ware into a whaling port, and that the houses they live in were built out of the wages you gave them. I am thankful that most of them have water in their cellars."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The day came. Alice Morgeson, and Helen with her baby, arrived the night before; and Ben and Mr. Somers drove from Milford early in the afternoon. Mr. Somers was affable, and patronizing. When introduced to Veronica he betrayed astonishment. "She is not like you, Cassandra. Are you in delicate health, my dear?" addressing her.

"I have a peculiar constitution, I believe."

He made excuses to her for Mrs. Somers, and his daughters, to which she answered not a word. He was in danger of being embarrassed, and I enticed him away from her—not before she whispered gravely, "Why did *he* come?" I went over the house with him, and he remarked on its situation, for sun and shade, and protection from, or exposure to, the winds; tasted the water, and pronounced it excellent. He thought I had a true idea of hospitality; the fires everywhere proclaimed that. Temperance had the air of a retainer; there was an atmosphere about our premises, which placed them at a distance from the present. Alice came to my assistance and entertained him so well that I could leave him.

We had invited a few friends and relations to witness the ceremony, at eight o'clock. I had been consulted so often on various matters, that it was dark before I finished my tasks,

The last was to arrange some flowers I had ordered in Milford. I kept a bunch of them in reserve for Verry's plate; for we were to have a supper, at father's request, who thought it would be less tiresome to feed the guests, than to talk to them. Verry did not know this, though she had asked several times why we were all so busy.

It was near seven when I went up stairs to find her. Temperance had sent Manuel and Fanny to the different rooms with tea, bread and butter, and the message that it was all we were to have at present. Ben had been extremely silent since his arrival, and disposed to reading. I looked over his shoulder once, and saw that it was "Scott's Life of Napoleon" he perused; and an hour after, being obliged to ask him a question, saw him still at the same page. He was now dressing probably. Helen and Alice were in their rooms. Mr. Somers was napping on the parlor sofa; father was meditating at his old post in the dining room, and smoking. It was a familiar picture; but there was a rent in the canvass, and a figure was missing—she who had been its light!

I found Verry sound asleep on the sofa in my room.

A glass full of milk was on the floor beside her, and a plate with a slice of bread. The lamp had been lighted by some one, and carefully shaded from her face. She had been restless, I thought, for her hair had fallen out of the comb, and half covered her face, which was like marble in its whiteness and repose. Her right arm was extended; I took her hand, and her warm, humid fingers closed over mine.

"Wake up, Verry; it is time to be married."

She opened her eyes, without stirring, and fixed them upon me. "Do you know any man, who is like Ben? Or was it he whom I have just left in the dark world of sleep?"

"I know his brother, who is like him, but dark in complexion; and his hair is black."

"His hair is not black."

I rushed out of the room, muttering some excuse, came back, and arranged her toilette; but she remained with her arm still extended.

"It was a strange place where we met; curious, dusty old trees grew about it. He was cutting the back of one with a dagger, and the pieces he carved out fell to the ground, as if they were elastic. He made me pick them up, though I wished to listen to a man who was lying under one of the trees, wrapped in a cloak, keeping time with *his* dagger, and singing a wild air."

"'What do you see?'" said the first.

"'A letter on every piece,'" I answered, and spelt Cassandra. 'Are you Ben transformed?' I asked, for he had his features, his air, though he was a swarthy, spare man, with black, curly hair, dashed with grey; but he pricked my arm with his dagger, and said, 'Go on.' I picked up the rest, and spelt 'Somers.'

"'Cassandra Somers! now tell her,'" he whispered, turning me gently from him, with a hand precisely like Ben's."

"No, it is handsomer."

"Before me was a space of sea. Before I crossed, I wanted to hear that wild music; but I heard your voice."

She sat up, and unbuttoned her sleeve. *As I live*, there was a red mark on her arm above her elbow!

I crushed my hands together, and set my teeth, for I would have kissed the mark, and washed it with my tears. But Verry must not be agitated now. She divined my feelings, for the first time in her life. "I have indeed been in a long sleep, as far as *you* are concerned; this means something. My blindness is removed by a dream. Do you despise me?" Two large, limpid tears dropped down her smooth cheeks without ruffling the expression of her face.

"I have prided myself upon my delicacy of feeling. You may have remarked that I considered myself your superior?"

"You are all wrong. I have no delicate feelings at all; they are as coarse and fibrous as the husk of a cocoa-nut. Do for heaven's sake get up, and let me dress you."

She burst into laughter. "Bring me some water, then."

I brought her a bowl full, and stood near her with a towel; but she splashed it over me, and dribbled her hands in it till I was in despair. I took it away, and wiped her face, which looked at me so childly, so elfish, so wilful, and so tenderly, that I took it between my hands and kissed it. I pulled her up to a chair, for she was growing wilful every moment; but she must be humored. I combed her hair, put on her shoes and stockings, and in short dressed her. Father came up, and begged me to hurry, as everybody had come. I sent him for Ben, who came, with a pale, happy face, and shining eyes. She looked at him seriously. "I like you best," she said.

"It *is* time you said that. Oh Verry! how lovely you are!"

"I feel so."

"Come, come," urged father.

"I do not want these gloves," she said, dropping them.

Ben slipped on the third finger of her left hand a plain ring. She kissed it, and he looked as if about to be translated.

"Forever, Verry?"

"Forever."

"Wait a moment," I said, "I want a collar," giving a glance into the glass. What a starved, thin, haggard face I saw, with its border of pale hair! Whose were those wide, pitiful, robbed eyes?

I hurried into the room in advance, to show them their place, in front of a screen of plants. When they entered, the company rose, and the ceremony was performed. Veronica's dress was commented upon, and not approved of; being black, it was considered ominous. She looked like a 'cloud with a silver lining.' I also made my comments. Temperance, whose tearful eyes were fixed on her darling, was unconscious that she had taken from her pocket, and was flourishing, a large red and yellow silk handkerchief, while the cambric one she intended to use was neatly folded in her left hand. She wore the famous plum-colored silk, old style, which had come into a fortune in the way of wrinkles. A large bow of black ribbon, testified that she was in mourning. Hepsey rubbed her thumb across her fingers, with the vacant air of habit. I glanced at Alice; she was looking intently at Fanny, whose eyes were fixed upon father. A strange feeling of annoyance troubled me; but the ceremony was over. Arthur congratulated himself on having a big brother. Ben was so pale, and wore so exalted an expression, that he agitated me, almost beyond control.

After the general shaking of hands, there came retorts for me. "When shall we have occasion to congratulate you?" And, "You are almost at the corner." And, "Your travelling from home seems only to have been an advantage to Veronica."

"I tell you, cousin Sue," said Arthur, who overheard the last remark, "that you don't know what they say of Cassandra in Rosville. She's the biggest beauty they ever had, and had lots of beaus."

A significant expression passed over cousin Sue's face, which was noticed by Alice Morgeson, who colored deeply.

"Have you not forgotten?" I asked her.

"It was of you I thought, not myself. I cannot tell you how utterly the past has gone, or how insignificant the result has proved."

"Alice," said father, "can you carve?"

'Splendidly."

'Come, and sit at the foot of my table; Mr. Somers will take charge of the smaller one."

"With pleasure."

"Slip out," whispered Fanny, "and look at the table; Temperance wants you."

"For the Lord's sake!" cried Temperance, "say whether things are ship-shape."

I was surprised at the taste she had displayed, and told her so.

"For once I have tried to do my best," she said; "all for Verry. Call 'em in; the turkeys will be on in a whiffle."

Tables were set in the hall, as well as in the dining room. "They must sit down," she continued, "so that they may eat their victuals in peace." The supper was a relief to Veronica, and I blesssed father's forethought. Nobody was exactly merry, but there was a proper cheerfulness. Temperance, Fanny, and Manuel were in attendance; the latter spilled a good deal of coffee on the carpet, in his enjoyment of the scene; and when he saw Veronica take the flowers in her hand, he exclaimed, "Santa Maria!"

Everybody turned to look at him.

"What are you doing here, Manuel?" asked Ben.

"I wait on the Senoritas," he answered. "Take plum duff?"

Everybody laughed.

"Do you like widows?" whispered Fanny, at the back of my chair. I made a sign to her to attend to her business, but, as she suggested, looked at Alice. At that moment, she and father were drinking wine together. I thought her handsomer than ever; she had expanded into a fair, smooth middle age.

The talking and clattering melted vaguely into my ears; I was a lay-figure in the scene, and my soul wandered elsewhere. Mr. Somers began to fidget gently, which father perceiving, he rose from the table. Soon after the guests departed. The remains of the feast vanished; the fires burnt down; 'winding sheets' wrapped the flame of the candles; and suppressed gaping set in.

The flowers, left to themselves, began to give out odors which perfumed the rooms. I went about extinguishing the waning candles, and stifling the dying fires—finished my work and was going up stairs, when I heard Veronica playing, and stopped to listen. It was not a pæan, nor a lament that she played, but a fluctuating, vibratory air, expressive of mu-

tation. I hung over the stair railing after she had ceased, convinced that she had been playing for herself a farewell, which freed me from my bond to her. Mr. Somers came along the hall with a candle, and I waited for him, to ask him if I could do anything for his comfort.

"My dear," he said with apprehension, "your sister is a genius, I think."

"In music.—yes."

"What a deplorable thing for a woman!"

"A woman of genius is but a heavenly lunatic, or an anomaly sphered between the sexes;—do you agree?"

He laughed, and pushed his spectacles up on his forehead.

"My dear, I am astonished that Ben's choice fell as it did—"

"Good night, Sir," I said so loudly, that he almost dropped his candle, and I retired to my room, taking a chair by the fire, with a sigh of relief. After a while Ben and Veronica came up.

"It is a cold night," I remarked.

"I am in an enchanted palace," said Ben, "where there is no weather."

"Cassy, will you take these pins out of my hair?" asked Verry, seating herself in an easy chair. "Ben, we will excuse you."

"How good of you." He strode across the passage, went into her room, and shut the door.

"There, Verry, I have unbound your hair."

"But I want to talk."

I took her hand, and led her out. She stood before her door for a moment silently, and then gave a little knock. No answer came She knocked again; the same silence as before. At last she was obliged to open it herself, and enter without any bidding.

"Which will rule?" I thought, as I slipped down the back stairs, and listened at the kitchen door. I heard nothing. Finding an old cloak in the entry, I wrapped myself in it and left the house. The moon was out-riding black, scudding clouds, and the wind moaned round the sea, which looked like a vast, wrinkled serpent in the moon-light.

I walked to Gloster Point, and rested under the lee of the lighthouse, but could not, when I made the attempt, see to read the inscription inside my watch, by the light of the lantern. I must have fallen asleep from fatigue, still hold-

ing it in my hand; for when I started homeward, there was a pale reflection of light in the east, and the sea was creeping quietly towards it, with a murmuring morning song.

CHAPTER XL.

I looked across the bay from my window. "The snow is making 'Pawshee's Land' white again, and I remain this year the same. No change, no growth, or development! The fulfilment of duty avails me nothing; and self-discipline has passed the necessary point."

I struck the sash with my closed hand, for I would now give my life a new direction, and it was fettered. But I would be resolute, and break the fetters; had I not endured a 'mute case' long enough? Manuel, who had been throwing snowballs against the house, stopped, and looked towards the gate, and then ran towards it. A pair of tired splashed horses dashed down the drive. Manuel had the reins, and Ben was beside him, reeling slightly on the seat of the wagon. I ran down to meet him; he had been on a trip to Belem, where he never went except when he wanted money.

"I have some news for you," he said, putting his arm in mine, as he jumped from the wagon. "Come in, and pull off my boots, Manuel." I brought a chair for him, and waited till his boots were off. "Bring me a glass of brandy."

I stamped my foot. Verry entered with a book. "Ah, Verry, darling, come here."

"Why do you drink brandy? Have you over-driven the horses?"

He drank the brandy. She nodded kindly to him, shut her book, and slipped out, without approaching him.

"That's *her* way," he said, staring hard at me. "She always says in the same unmoved voice, 'Why do you drink brandy?'"

"And then—she will not come to kiss you."

"The child is dead, for the first thing. (Cigar, Manuel.) Second, I was possessed to come home by the way of Rosville. When did your father go away, Cass?"

I felt faint, and sat down.

"Ah, we *all* have a weakness; does yours overcome you?"

"He went three days ago."

"I saw him at Alice Morgeson's."

"Arthur?"

"He didn't go to see Arthur. He will marry Alice, and I must build my house now."

A devil ripped open my heart; its fragments flew all over me, blinding and deafening me.

"He will be home to-night."

"Very well."

"What shall you say, Cassy?"

"Expose that little weakness to him."

"When will you learn real life?"

"Please ask him, when he comes, if he will see me in my room?"

I waited there. My cup was filled at last. My sin swam on the top.

He came in smoking, and taking a chair between his legs, sat opposite me, and tapped softly the back of it with his fingers. "You sent for me?"

"I wanted to tell you, that Charles Morgeson loved me from the first, and you remember that I staid by him to the last."

"What more is there?" knocking over the chair, and seizing me: "tell me."

His eyes, that were blood-shot with anger, fastened on my mouth. "I know, though, damn him! he was cunning enough to make you criminal only in desire. Does Alice know this?" And he pushed me backwards

"All."

An expression of pain and disappointment crossed his face; he ground his teeth fiercely.

"Don't marry her, father; you will kill me, if you do!"

"Must you alone have license?"

He resumed his cigar, which he picked up from the floor.

"It would seem that we have not known each other. What evasiveness there is in our natures! Your mother was the soul of candor, yet I am convinced I never knew her.

"If you bring Alice here, I must go. We cannot live together."

"I understand why she would not come here. She said that she must see you first. She is in Milford."

He knocked the ashes from his cigar, looked round the room, and then at me, who wept bitterly. His face contracted with a spasm

"We were married two days ago." And turning from me quickly, he left the room.

I was never so near grovelling on the face of the earth as then; let me but fall, and I was sure that I never should rise.

Ben knew it, but left it to me to tell Veronica.

My grief broke all bounds, and we changed places; she tried to comfort me, forgetting herself.

"Let us go away to the world's end with Ben." But suddenly recollecting that she liked Alice, she cried, "What shall I do?"

What could she do, but offer an unreasoning opposition? Aunt Merce cried herself sick, fond as she was of Alice, and Temperance declared that if she hadn't married a widower herself, she would put in an oar. Anyhow, she hadn't married a man with grown-up daughters.

"What ails Fanny?" she asked me the next day. "She looks like a froze pullet."

"Where is she now?"

"Making the beds."

Temperance knew well what was the matter, but was too wise to interfere. I found her, not bed-making, but in a spare room, staring at the wall. She looked at me with dry eyes, bit her lips, and folded her hands across her chest, after her old, defiant fashion. I did not speak.

"It is so," she said; "you need not tear me to pieces with your eyes, I can confess it to *you*, for you are as bad as I am. I love him!" And she got up to shake her fist in my face. "My heart, and brain and soul are as good as hers. and *he* knows it."

I could not utter a word.

"I know him as you never knew him, and have for years, since I was that starved, poor-house brat your mother took. Don't trouble yourself to make a speech about ingratitude. I know that your mother was good and merciful, and that I should have worshipped her; but I never did. Do you suppose I ever thought he was perfect, as the rest of you thought? He is full of faults. I thought he was dependant on me. He knows how I feel. Oh, what shall I do?" She threw up her arms, and dropped on the floor in a hysteric fit. I locked the door, and picked her up. "Come out of it, Fanny; I shall stay here till you do."

By dint of shaking her, and opening the window, she began to come to. After two or three fearful laughs and shudders, she opened her eyes She saw my compassion, and tears fell in torrents; I cried too. The poor girl kissed my hands; a new soul came into her face.

"Oh Fanny, bear it as well as you can! You and I will be friends."

"Forgive me! I was always bad; I am now. If that woman comes here, I'll stab her with Manuel's knife."

"Pooh! The knife is too rusty; it would give her the lockjaw. Besides, she will never come. I know her. She is already more than half way to meet me; but I shall not perform my part of the journey, and she will return."

"You don't say so!" her ancient curiosity reviving.

"Manuel keeps it sharp," she said presently, relapsing into jealousy.

"You are a fool. Have you eaten anything to-day?"

"I can't eat."

"That's the matter with you—an empty stomach is the cause of most distressing pangs."

Ben urged me to go to Milford to meet Alice, and to ask her to come to our house. But father said no more to me on the subject. Neither did Veronica. In the afternoon they drove over to Milford, returning at dusk. She refused to come with them, Ben said, and never would, probably. "You have thrown out your father terribly."

"You notice it, do you?"

"It is pretty evident."

"What is your opinion?"

He was about to condemn, when he recollected his own interference in my life. "Ah! you have me. I think you are right, as far as the past which relates to Alice is concerned. But if she chooses to forget it, why don't you? We do much that is contrary to our moral ideas, to make people comfortable. Besides, if we do not lay our ghosts, our closets will be overcrowded."

"We may determine some things for ourselves, irrespective of consequences."

"Well, there is a mess of it."

Fanny had watched for their return, counting on an access of misery, for she believed that Alice would come also. It was what *she* should have done. Rage took possession of her when she saw father alone. She planted herself before him, in my presence, in a contemptuous attitude. He changed color, and then her mood changed.

"What shall I do?" she asked piteously.

I tried to get away before she made any further progress; but he checked me, dreading the scene which he foreboded, without comprehending.

"Fanny," he said harshly, but with a confused face, "you mistake me."

"Not I; it was your wife and children who mistook you."

"What is it you would say?"

"You have let me be your slave."

"It is not true, I hope—what your behavior indicates?"

I forgave him everything then. Fanny had made a mistake. He had only behaved very selfishly towards her, without having any perception of her—that was all! She was confounded, stared at him a moment, and rushed out. That interview settled her; she was a different girl from that day.

"Father, you will go to Rosville, and be rich again. Can you buy this house from Ben, for me? A very small income will suffice me and Fanny, for you may be sure that I shall keep her. Temperance will live with Verry; Ben will build, now that his share of his grandfather's estate will come to him.'

"Very well," he said with a sigh, "I will bring it about."

"It is useless for us to disguise the fact—I have lost you. You are more dead to me than mother is.'

"You say so."

It was the truth. I was the only one of the family who never went to Rosville. Aunt Merce took up her abode with Alice, on account of Arthur, whom she idolized. When father was married again, the Morgeson family denounced him again for it, and for leaving Surrey; but they accepted his invitations to Rosville, and returned with glowing accounts of his new house, and his hospitality.

By the next June Ben's house was completed, and they moved. Its site was a knoll to the east of our house, which Veronica had chosen. Her rooms were towards the orchard, and Ben's commanded a view of the sea. He had not ventured to intrude, he told her, upon the Northern Lights, and she must not bother him about his boat-house, or his pier. They were both delighted with the change, and kept house like children. Temperance indulged their whims to the utmost, though she thought Ben's new-fangled notions were silly; but they might keep him from *something worse*. This something was a shadow which frightened me, though I fought it off. I was weary of trouble, and shut my eyes as long as possible. Whenever Ben went from home, and he often drove to Milford, or to some of the towns near, he came back disordered with drink. At the sight my hopes would sink. But they rose again, he was so genial, so loving, so calmly contented afterwards. As Verry never spoke of it, either to Temperance or me, I ima-

gined she was not troubled much. She could not feel as I felt, for she knew nothing of the Bellevue Pickersgill family history.

The day they moved was a happy one for me. I was at last left alone in my own house, and I regained an absolute self-possession, and a sense of occupation I had long been a stranger to. My ownership oppressed me, there was so much liberty to realize.

I had an annoyance, soon after I came into sole possession. Father's business was not yet settled, and he came to Surrey. He was paying his debts in full, he told me, eking out what he lacked himself with the property of Alice. He could not have used much of it, however, for the vessels that were out at the time of the failure came home with good cargoes. I fancied that he had more than one regret while settling his affairs; that he missed the excitement and vicissitudes of a maritime business. Nothing disagreeable arose between us, till I happened to ask him, what were the contents of a box which had arrived the day before.

"Something Alice sent you; shall we open it?"

I made no answer; but it was opened, and he took out a sea-green and white velvet carpet, with a scarlet leaf on it, and a piece of sea-green and white brocade for curtains. Had she sought the world over, she could have found nothing to suit me so well.

"She thought that Verry might have a fancy for some of the old furniture, and that you would accept these in its place."

"There's nothing here to match this splendor, and I cannot bear to make a change. Verry must have them, for she took nothing from me."

"Just as you please."

The box went to Verry. My annoyance was, that I longed to keep the carpet and curtains. I saw them with my mind's eye for a week, made up, and ornamenting my parlor. I wished that Verry would insist upon my keeping them!

CHAPTER XLI.

"What a hot day!" said Fanny. "Every door and window is open. There is not a breath of air."

"It will be calm all day," I said. "We have but two or three days like this in a year. Give me another cup of coffee. Is it nine yet?"

"Nearly. I ought to go to Hepsey's to-day. She won't be able to leave her bed, the heat weakens her so."

"Do go. How still it is! The shadows of the trees on the Neck reach almost from shore to shore, and there's a fish-boat, motionless."

"The boat was there when I got up."

"Everything is blue and yellow, or blue and white."

"How your hair waves this morning! It is handsomer than ever."

I went to the glass with my cup of coffee. "I look younger in the summer."

"What's the use of looking younger here?" she asked gruffly. "You never see a man."

"I see Ben coming, with Verry, and Manuel behind."

"Hillo!" called Ben, pulling up his horses, in front of the window. "We are going on a pic-nic. Won't you go?"

"How far?"

"Fifteen or twenty miles."

"Go on; I had rather imprison the splendid day here."

"There's nothing for dinner," said Fanny.

"The fish boat may come in, in time."

"Will three o'clock do for you? If so, I'll stay with Hepsey till then."

"Four will answer?"

She cleared away my breakfast things, and left me. I sat by the window an hour, looking over the water, my thoughts drifting through a golden haze, and then went up to my room, and looked out again. If I turned my eyes inside the walls, I was aware of a yearning, yawning empty void within me, which I did not like. I sauntered into Verry's room, to see if any clouds were coming up from the north. There were none. The sun had transfixed the sky, and walked through its serene blue, "burning without beams." Neither bird nor insect chirped; they were hid from the radiant heat in tree and sod. I went back again to my own window. The subtle beauty of these inorganic powers stirred me to mad regret and frantic longing. I stretched out my arms to embrace the presence which my senses evoked.

It would be better to get a book, I concluded, and hunted up Barry Cornwall's songs. With it I would go to the parlor, which was shaded. I turned the leaves going down, and went in humming;

'Mount on the dolphin Pleasure,' and threw myself on the sofa beside—*Desmond!*

I dropped Barry Cornwall.

"I have come," he said, in a voice deathly faint.

"How old you have grown, Desmond!"

"But I have taken such pains with my hands for you! You said they were handsome; are they?"

I kissed them.

He was so spare, and brown, and his hair was quite gray! Even his mustache looked silvery.

"Two years to-day since I have worn the watch, Desmond."

He took one exactly like it from his pocket, and showed me the same inscription inside.

"And the ruby ring, on the guard?"

"It is gone, you see; you must put one there now."

"Forgive me."

"Ah Cassy! I couldn't come till now. You see what battles *I* must have had since I saw you. It took me so long to break the cursed habit of drunkenness. I was afraid of myself, afraid to come; but I have tried myself to the utmost, and hope I am worthy of you. Will you trust me?"

"I am yours, as I always have been."

"I have eaten an immense quantity of oil and garlic," he said with a sigh. "But Spain is a good place to reform in. How is Ben?"

I shook my head.

"Don't tell me anything sad now. Poor fellow! God help him."

Fanny was talking to some one on the walk; the fisherman probably, who was bringing fish.

"Do you want some dinner?"

"I have had no breakfast."

"I must see about something for you."

"Not to leave me, Cassy."

"Just for a few minutes."

"No."

"But I want to cry by myself, besides looking after the dinner."

"Cry here then, with me. Come, Cassandra, my wife! My God, I shall die with happiness."

A mortal paleness overspread his face.

"Desmond, Desmond, do you know how I love you? Feel my heart,—it has throbbed with the weight of you since that night in Belem, when you struck your head under the mantel."

He was speechless. I murmured loving words to him, till he drew a deep breath of life and strength.

"These fish are small," said Fanny at the door. "Shall I take them!"

"Certainly," said Desmond. "I'll pay for them."

"It is Ben in black lead," said Fanny.

We laughed.

At dusk Ben and Veronica drove up. Desmond was seated in the window. Ben fixed his eyes upon him, without stopping.

We ran out, and called to him.

"Old fellow," said Desmond, "willing or not, I have come."

Ben's face was a study; so many emotions assailed him that my heart was wrung with pity.

"Give her to me," Desmond continued, in a touching voice. "You are her oldest friend, and have a right."

"She was always yours," he answered. "To contend with her was folly."

Veronica took hold of Ben's chin, and raised his head to look into his face. "What dream have you had?"

But he made no reply to her. We were all silent for a moment, then he said, "Was I wrong, Des?"

"No, no."

"Well, I am now."

While I was saying to myself, in behalf of Veronica, whose calm face baffled me, "Enigma, Sphinx," she turned to Desmond, holding out her right arm, and said, "You are the man I saw in my dream."

"And you are like the Virgin I made an offering to, only not quite so bedizened." He took her extended hand and kissed it.

Ben threw the reins with a sudden dash towards Manuel, who was standing by, and jumped down.

"Have tea with me," I asked, "and music, too. Verry, will you play for Desmond?"

She took his arm, and entered the house.

"Friend," I said to Ben, who lingered by the door. "'To contend with me was not folly,' unless it has kept you from contending with yourself. Tell me—how is it with you?"

"Cassandra, the jaws of hell are open. If you are satisfied with the end, I must be."

After I was married, I went to Belem. But Mrs. Somers never forgave me; and Mr. Somers liked Desmond no better than he had in former times. Neither did Adelaide and Ann

ever consider the marriage in any light but that of a mis-alliance. Nor did they recognize any change in him. It might be permanent, but it was no less an aberration which they mistrusted. The ground plan of the Bellevue Pickersgill character could not be altered.

In a short time after we were married we went to Europe and staid two years.

These last words I write in the summer time at our house in Surrey, for Desmond likes to be here at this season, and I write in my old chamber. Before its windows rolls the blue summer sea. Its beauty wears a relentless aspect to me now; its eternal monotone expresses no pity, no compassion.

Veronica is lying on the floor watching her year-old baby. It smiles continually, but never cries, never moves, except when it is moved. Her face, thin and melancholy, is still calm and lovely. But her eyes go no more in quest of something beyond. A wall of darkness lies before her, which she will not penetrate. Aunt Merce sits near me with her knitting. When I look at her I think how long it is since mother went, and wonder whether death is not a welcome idea to those who have died Aunt Merce looks at Verry and the child with a sorrowful countenance; exchanges a glance with me, and shakes her head. If Verry speaks to her, she answers cheerfully, and tries to conceal the grief which she feels when she sees the mother and child together.

Ben has been dead six months. He died in delirium tremens. Only Desmond and I were with him in his last moments. When he sprang from his bed, staggered backwards and fell dead, we clung together with faint hearts, and mutely questioned each other.

"God is the Ruler," he said at last. "Otherwise let this mad world crush us now."

THE END.

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